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WIRE

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THE WIRE

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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editor's idea

Boiled in as usual by belligerent ranks of vinyl artillery, miniature perspex cassette cases forming silent battlements, CDs stacked in siege towers of clear plastic, and able now after all this time to perceive the dark hum of unheard music as it lingers at my border posts, vibrating incessantly in all formats, insisting on my total, unbiased attention, I sense the impulse to retreat to a quiet, neutral place free from the onslaught of intercontinental personal creative projects launched by unknown subjects in foreign lands.

Instead, I cross to one of the audio supermarkets that surround Wire HQ, and offload \$90 on ancient (by current standards) black American music newly reissued in 2D Bit K2 Super Coding and imported from Japan in limited, one-time-only, buy-now-or-regret-later editions.

Some of this music might be up to 30 years old, but applying the philosophy of the car boot sale, it's new to me.

So open the boot, what's inside?

Pulled from the rack browsers find, no thought, no hesitation, is Alice Coltrane's *A Monkstrous Trio*, a collection of spellbinding, low-key improvisations, some recorded with Jimmy Garrison and Rashied Ali in 1968 almost a year to the day after the death of John Coltrane, and perceived by Alice as a continuation of the spirit of her husband's work. On the cover Alice sits at the piano, next to a gigantic harp, looking like a member of The Supremes, while John, "the mystic, Onenessdancer", stares impassively from out of a label logo, his head carved from an organic alloy of ebony and granite. "Produced By Coltrane Records", it says on the cover, but this is an Impulse Records reissue, and like my other purchases this working weekend, is packaged in a stunningly futuristic 5" square facsimile of the original vinyl's heavy-duty cardboard gatefold sleeve.

I linger longer over an unknown Pharoah Sanders release, and three albums recorded by the rail-thin saxophonist Marion Brown in the early 70s, which were partly inspired by "the dream books, conks and do-raps, charms and amulets" of his native Georgia and the writings of the Harlem Renaissance figure Jean

Toomer, but it's useless to resist, and so there they are, over by the office CD player, ready to divert me from the serious purpose of compiling work on the copy of the magazine you now hold in your hands.

Retrospectively dubbed afro jazz, cosmic jazz, Fourth World jazz, Afrocentric pan-world fusion, this is music which, for my generation at least, has been obscured by the received wisdom that nothing of any lasting consequence occurred in the time frame 1968-76, as well as the poker-faced responses of mainstream jazz criticism, encapsulated in the *Penguin Guide To Jazz's* assessment of Pharoah Sanders's 1966 Impulse album *Tauhid* "The long tracks, 'Upper And Lower Egypt' and a zodiacal suite, tend to oversauce intelligent improvisations with pointless 'ethnic' effects and chants".

Rather than too much ketchup, those effects and chants, hovering hypnotically at the edges of the music, signalled no visa required, providing a point of entry into a music that was otherwise an impenetrable nation-state to the non-initiate.

In the late 70s, looking to escape the grey skies of the post-punk climate, I ventured into alien lands, listening to Latin jazz, soul jazz, jazz funk, and the more the music departed from the tropes and conventions of the territory, the closer I got to it. Fred Wesley & The New JBs looking into an idiosyncratic salsa montuno, musicians raised in the South Bronx barroom posing in Regency costume on the cover of a record released by an imprint of the Fania empire and performing Latinabe versions of Beethoven's Fifth.

Listening now as bells shimmer around one of Alice Coltrane's tumbling piano solos, or to Marion Brown's alto sax abstractions flying over a ring-modulated Hammond organ played by Mulik Richard Abrams, I feel like I'm home again, back in a borderless zone accessible by anyone with ears to listen (and money to burn).

Perhaps somewhere in the long hours of new music that beckons me from all corners of *The Wire* office there are similar epiphanies awaiting discovery. They will have to wait a little longer, however, tense with anticipation, I have yet to listen to that Pharoah Sanders album. **TONY HERRINGTON**

In the June 97 issue of *The Wire*

George Michael reveals how he has embraced the influence of Tibetan shugro: "Ulan Bator rocks" George tells our stunned reporter. Plus: Bono in confession box shocker: "Father, I have sinned, U2 are the worst group in the world... ever"

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letters

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Ethiopian erratum

Good to see my Aster Aweke/Abdis Ababa report in print (*Global Ear*, *The Wire* 158) and was happy that you'd been able to mould it into something more readable. However, there were a couple of things that seemed to get lost in translation (eg the 'Catherine Wheel' dancing was at an essentially Entreen, not Ethiopian concert in London), but perhaps the most important was the following.

The edited version suggests that I describe the new government of Ethiopia as "unpopular". This was not my intention, nor a direct observation, and I'm anxious not to contribute further confusion to a region that has already received more than its fair share of 'disinformation'. The truth, I believe, is far more complex, but the important facts are that the war has finished and the killing has stopped.

Eritrea is now an independent country and there is a new government in Ethiopia that owes little to previous structures of power. Suspicion or resentment of any government is perhaps not so surprising given these recent experiences and the tragic nature of the war. However, curfew has ended, newspapers are published containing a wide range of opinion, and the efforts to rebuild a shattered infrastructure are self-evident.

From what I observe, and particularly within Ethiopia, if doubts exist they are set aside in favour of sheer relief that people can now at least try and get on with a normal life. To say that the government is simply unpopular would be doing a disservice to both the people and the government.

Iain Scott London

HipHop lops

Haven't you got anything better to offer your readers than third-rate musicians, turned pretentious or 'distic' artists? After the vanity of Bill Drummond (*The Wire* 157), the insanity of Rammellzee (158). As nonsense goes, 'Ikoni-klastic Panzerism' and 'Gothic Futurism' belong right up there with 'Harmidroids' and the 'Lyden Chromatic Concept', though at least Omette Coleman and George Russell's so-called 'theories' have some tenuous connection to actual music. Sure, Rammellzee's ideas may be of cultural interest (along with the Samurai imagery of Wu Tang Clan, Clinton's Motherhood and all its characters, the work, cited in your article, of Pedro Bell, the quasi-science of Mi-Base, not to mention other crackpot spin-offs of HipHop conspiracy theories, etc), but after all it does say 'Adventures in Modern Music' on the cover of the magazine, and I can't think of anything of

Rammellzee's worth listening to since the *Wildstyle* soundtrack in 1983 (sorry, *Rhythm Kites* doesn't cut it). If, to retain your street cred, you must feature something on HipHop, at least do someone mutually worthwhile: Jungle Brothers (*The Wire* 157) all right, but Jenu The Damaja (154)? I'd appreciate it more if you had the courage to admit that there's precious little of musical interest left in HipHop anymore, and give some column inches to Musica Transonic or General Magic & Pita.

Dan Warburton Paris

Barron planet

Re: Philip Brophy's article on the secret history of film music (*The Wire* 158). The soundtrack to *Forbidden Planet* was not written by Remmi Grossman and Oskar Sala but was composed and performed by the American husband and wife team of Louis and Bebe Barron. The Barrons were underground electronic composers and sometime collaborators with John Cage in the 50s, and the full story of their unusual involvement in the scoring of a mainstream 50s sci-fi movie is recounted in an interview with Bebe Barron in *Re/Search Publications: Incredibly Strange Music, Vol 2*.

The original soundtrack was recently reissued on CD (Small Planet Records PR D-001) and its dark, reverberated electronics still come across as remarkably out there. (A friend who heard it recently thought it was Aphex Twin!) Nipping aside, keep up the good work.

Mike Sumpter London

Philip is subtly mortified by his mistake (which many of you wrote in to correct). He says he was actually listening to the *Forbidden Planet* soundtrack while writing the article, but got confused because he was also listening to Sala and Grossman's near-contemporary and similarly electronic score for Hitchcock's *The Birds* at the same time. He is now being forced to listen to John Williams's entire back catalogue by way of penance. The second, fact-perfect part of Philip's soundtrack series will now appear in the June issue — Ed

Urbane primitive

First of all thank you for that informative Art article (*The Wire* 158). One bitter side note: the way Hogler Crayke relates the story behind the Ethnological Forgery Series leaves him as a man with absolute scales in music. "Primitive native people who are not able to play 'Brr, what's that?' In retrospect, that makes some of Crayke's glorious moments of the past, in which he combined music of the world with his own

sounds, appear like robbery, doing no justice to the music cultures in question

Till Fluenter Germany

Dear John

It was both amusing and disturbing to see myself quoted in the recent John Zorn article (*The Primer*, *The Wire* 156). Amusing because I couldn't remember saying 'I don't like Zorn's music and though I don't know him personally he seems like a loudmouth', disturbing because it makes me sound like an old curmudgeon!

I did say it, as it turns out, to Edward Strickland in his interview with me in *American Composers*, so I can't deny it. But I have to say that I recently heard a new work, a 'piano concerto' by Zorn played by The American Composers Orchestra and Steven Drury in Carnegie Hall (that bastion of high Western art music!), and I was deeply moved by it. His originality in handling the orchestra and the strange spirituality of his musical vision left me staggered. So I can't say I don't like his music, at least not lately.

As to being a loudmouth? Anyone who read his distaste in the New Music America BAM program book in 1989, which was pompous and self-righteous, taking the role of icon smasher to further his own 'magmatic' ends, would probably agree with me. But that was eight years ago. I recently ran into him and he seemed very soft spoken, so I stand corrected on all counts.

Ingram Marshall (the 'lesser') was e-mail

Corrections Issue 158 In our Chris Cutler feature we restated the legend of the Henry Cow name being a contraction of the US composer Henry Cowell. Apparently this isn't so. According to Cutler it was just a 'silly name' in the manner of The Bonzo Dog Doo Dan Band and was made up by group member Tim Hodgkinson. In Soundcheck, the review of the RLW/Splintered CD neglected to point out that the album is actually a collaboration between composer Ralf Wehowsky and UK group Splintered, not a Wehowsky solo album called Splintered. Apologies also for the non-existent Pierre Henry review, as telegraphed on last month's Contents page. The review went missing at the last minute, but returned in time to make it into this month's Soundcheck. In Soundings we referred to the Japanese group Buns as a power trio, but there are only two of them (although that's more than enough). Issue 157 The picture of David Kravins in the Bites section should have been credited to Frank Lennire □

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soundings may

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

Festivals/Special Events



Tribal Gathering In which just about anyone who's in any way linked to the international dance/techno scene comes together under new different tents — sorry, cutting-edge music environments. The highlight should be the unprincipled live appearance by Kraftwerk, other attractions include live sets by Daxi Punk, Orbital, DJ Shadow, Gus Go, Fluke, Speedy J, Two Lone Swordsmen, Protopop People, Cornershop, Red Snapper, Roni Size T Power and hundreds of DJs including DJ Cam, James Lavelle, John Peel, John Acquaviva, Kelli Hand, Richie Hawtin, Jeff Mills, Marshall Jefferson, Masters At Work, Roger Sanchez, Fabio Groovescore, Hype, Ray Kohli, DJ Krust, Randall, Doc Scott. There's also a comedy stage, cinema, multimedia area and cybercops. Luton Hoo Estate, Bedfordshire, 24 May, midday-10.30pm, £35 from Mean Foster venues or call 01711 344 0044

Essential Music Festival Popular Brighton weekend (24-26 May) whose highlight is the dance-themed Saturday, with appearances by The Orb, System 7, Chemical Brothers, David Byrne & Lenny Taylor, Luvu, B0B Stone, Grooverider & Fabio, Soulja, Bantulu, Spring Heel Jack, LTJ, Bonams, Project 23, Squaresourer, Kruder & Dorfmeister, Attila Blue, DJ Food, The Herbaliser, Psychomancy, Kennedy & Storm, Peshay, Roni Size, Krust, Daxi, Kumo, ProperHeads, Les Rythmes Digrales and a host more. Sunday is given over to indie rock, and Monday's 'roots' offer witnesses Ben Sherman, ADP, Culture, Israel Vibration, Ice-T, Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, Jungle

Brothers, Jaru The Damaja, The Brotherhood, Turn-Gab-Gab Underground, Afro-Celt Sound System, Fun-De-Mental, Loo Goo, Nitro Sawflies, Ray Ayala, Lolo Goo, Courtney Pine, Jimi Tenor, Jah Shaka and others. Brighton Stadium Park, 24-26 May, \$25 per day, info/booking 0851 230190

LMC Sixth Annual Festival Of Experimental Music, The London Musicians' Collective present their latest summer bonanza of music from the outer limits (23-26 May). Confirmed as we go to press are Jean-Paul Bourely and Elliott Sharp in a US guitar super-duo. This Heat drummer Charles Hayward and MIDI violinist Kalle Matthews are duo, and Belgian pianist Fred Van Hove (23). Ground Zero featuring Oromo Yoshinori and eight-piece komizake sampling outfit (24).

Roof, a combination of Phil Milton, celist Tom Cora, Lucie Er and Michael Veitcher (25), and new, coming up by Dagmar Krause and Maria Goyette (26). They will be assigned dates in the following: Japanese delectable-noise trio

Altered States, Bulgarian soundtrack/circus music ensemble NDRMA, West Coast percussionists Goro Rober, electronic violinist Phil Wachsmann, Led Zeppelin's Recorders with Roger Turner and Mike Cooper. Dutch reedman Luc Houdkamp, with more names to be fixed down. London Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, 23-26 May, £11/16 (week night), £32/525 (season ticket), by post from LMC Unit 3/6, Lifford House, 11-13 Leathermarket Street, London SE1 3HN. info: 0171 403 1922. There's also an LMC/Fringe Festival running called Puzel, celebrating the capital's little snail-club space (17-22 May) call 0181 802 5018 for details.

In With Zenobia Highlight of Bath Information Festival's weekend (20 May-1 June) celebrating the compositional might of DJ Spooky (aka James Xenakis). Over the three days, you can hear live performances of works such as *Requiem*, *Panoramas*, *Serment*, *Medio Senso*, etc. played by top notch performers. Released, Evan Parker, James Wood Critical Band, Ralf And, and The Graham Fiddie Group. Also in the Bath Festival Paul Durrall & Paul Rogers (Goldhill, 23 May), Tony Oxley/Tim Wray/Fred van Hove (Goldhill, 24), a triple bill featuring Aumath

(Nemo Winsone, Keny Woodler and John Taylor), French avant-garde jazzers Les Tapes From Vietnam, Kim Tappet's Tappery (Pavilion, 24, 10pm-1am), Bloodcount (Pavilion, 25), and more. For full information contact the Festival Office on 01225 463362.

Indian In London Nine-day showcase (10-24 May) for new and established UK/Asian musicians including startable duo Balu Shrivastava and Preet Singh Resya, Punjab group Kalki, Partha Sarathi Mukherjee, Mijnt Singh Chakraborty and Sanchita Pal. London Union Chapel, full details and advance booking from 0171 226 1686.

Electric Trick Weekend of multi-genre music events and collaborations at the Stadtgarten in Cologne, Germany (16-18 May). Appearing over the course of three days are: The Leskingen Room, a live improvisation featuring our own David Toop and Paul Schuster, David Moss, Scanner, New Zealanders Hayden Chisholm, Frank Schulte and Bernd Friedrich, aka Nordsee Urban Field/Drome, plus four hours of mixes by A-Musik's Georg Odl (16). Saturday 17: Jaki Leibenow's drummy/harpist trio Club Off Chios, Plasma & Gulsun Gök, Drome, Ryoji Ikeda, and further mixes and performances by Messias Ribaud, Odl, Toop, Chisholm, Moss and Markus Schmeider (Pavilion/West

Sab). Sunday 18 will be a drum 'n' bass spectacular including Groove Attack DJs, live mixes and DJing from Lige Style, and more. Venue location is the Stadtgarten, Venloerstrasse 40, 50672 Cologne, tickets 0920 195290/40 (weekends), info/booking 00 49 221 952 919 410x/00 49 221 952 919 490.

Impact Festival Dutch art/musica media event encompassing experimental movements in film, installation and music, programmes according to the theories of Gilles Deleuze. Some content includes performances by Scanner, David Toop, Paul Schulte, Odl, Bruce Gillett, DJ Spooky and Andrew Lagowski, aka SET. There will be providing a number of concerts, lectures and improvisations over the course of the event. United Theater Koker and other venues, Netherlands, 7-11 May, information 00 30 294 44 93, booking 00 30 234 11 08.

Musique Action Annual French festival of new music in Vendouzie-sur-Aveyron, participants include David Thomas & 2 Pale Boys, Iwan Morton/Tenors, Michel Doneda, Guy Kluwek, Bara Phillips, Derek Bailey/Tony Oxley, Koch/Staden/Schutz, Slavietruus, Peter Brottmann and more. 9-19 May, booking info on 00 393 57 52 24.

On Stage

Randalls Monumental tour undertaken by the North London outfit also masquerading as Space DJz, alongside club master Jah Shaka, Ghanaian housekeepers Kente, Ed Professor, and Q's Andrew Weatherall, Ed Rush, Darren Emerson, RPH and more. Cardiff University (1 May), Brighton Concordia (2), Iford Island (4), Sheffield Octagon (7), Manchester Sainsbury's Shop (8), Coventry The Planet (9), Newcastle University (10), Portsmouth Woodgrove Rooms (11), London Forum (16), and Nottingham Mansel Gallery Centre (17).

Tim Borne's Bloodcount UK tour by two of saxophone Borne's tones, the spiky, acoustic Bloodcount, and the Cagney inspired Paraphrase. Lancaster Gregson (23 May), London Purcell Room (24), Bath Pavilion (24), Pinnerhead Band On The Wall (28). Leads Inn Centre (29), Birmingham Cusard Factory (30-31).

Laurie Booth Two new works, *ACTUAL* and *Storngarden*, by the conceptual, modern choreographer. *ACTUAL* (a collaboration with Scanner and visual artist Tim Hoad, mixing telephone conversations into a Techno music scene. *Storngarden* has music by Hans Peter Kuhn and Paul Bunwell. London QEH, 3-4 May, Bares, 112-116, 0171 960 4242.

Philip Glass Two concerts by the New York Philharmonic's Philharmonia Orchestra (London's South Bank), the world premiere of his *Honoring Sara*, based on the *Boys* album of the same name (15 May), and an overview of his most well-known works played by The Glass Ensemble (16). Both at London RPH, 8pm, 0171 960 4242.

Grand Zero Oromo Yoshinori's turntable/house mayhem gives Scotland a could blast. Spring Tubbies, 21 May, 1654, 01786 443322.

Kangfussion Nina Tunc spin doctors return

for one night only, with Coldcut, The Herbaliser, DJ Food, Ollie Teeba, Funky Porcum, DJ Vadim, Kuro and Mr Scruff. London Blue Note, 29 May, 9pm-3am, £7, 011 729 8440

Seegy Kuryokhin Memorial Former collaborators and fans of this highly regarded Russian composer-improviser will rejoice he died in 1996. Expect to see Eino & The Bunyettes, Aquarium, William Parker's Collective Quarter, David Moss, Keshavan Musavi, John Wolf Brennan and Muscos Cosquens Ensemble. London ODEJ, 16 May, 7pm, £12.50-£8, 011 960 4242

Kalle Mathews + Pat Thomas + Steve Noble Light of MIDI sampling improv as violinist Mathews launches her debut CD. Plus Thomas Noble duo upgrade Western and Duke Ellington with breakfasts. London Spotz, 18 May, 7.30pm, £5/£3, 011 247 9747

Artie Morales + Nana Vasconcelos Fourth World percussion discussion is the centrepiece of The Big Bang, a weekend drum band should also featuring Afrobeat, Pundit Sharad Sahi, Kam-Zo and Joy Hirota. London Barbican, 4 May, 7.30pm, £13.50-£8.50, 011 638 8891

Morphogenesis + Resound Second in Eddie Pharaoh's Mithras Nights series, with Michael Prime and Guevara's organic Impro ensemble and Pharaoh's Resound including Peter McPhail and Michael Morris. London Spotz, 22 May, 8pm, £7.50/£5.50, 011 247 9747

Club Spaces



Anokha Talvin Singh's multicoloured mix goes on a UK tour this month, with various guests, at all venues, augmenting the regular line-up of Talvin, Equi and State Of Bengal. Bristol Blue House (4 May), Manchester NIA, Centre (10), Brighton Concordia (16), Oxford Zodiac (29) and Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (30)

Beat Waves (banking breakfast, dangerous drum 'n' bass and indie Electro from guests Spring Heel Jack and Deep Cops (4 May), Debut and Dodo (11), Do It Sound System (18); and Second Skin label night featuring Rolo & DJ Shift (25), London Jazz Bero, Sundays, 7.30pm-midnight, £2, 011 236 8112

The Big Chill All night spring vibes festival in four rooms, with sessions from T Power, Up Bustle & Dot, Yam Yam, Earthrise, Core, Heatsat, Misa K, Nelson Dilaton, Tom

William Parker The New York free jazz bassist appears as a member of the international Collective Quartet with Mark Hennen, Jeff Hoyer and Herz Gesser. Belfast Crescent Arts Centre, 15 May, £10/£7, 01232 242338

Archie Shepp 60th birthday concert by former Impulse! sax-melodist who now soaks up his act with big-hearted vocals. London ODEJ, 19 May, 7.45pm, £15/£12.50, 011 950 4242

Speedy 3 Dutch Techno/indie exponent plays in Newcastle University (11 May), Edinburgh Pulse (8), The Venue (2), Dublin Ormond Centre (3), then on the road with Richie Hawtin and Darren Price at Brighton Concordia (7), London Subteranea (8), plus Luke Slater, Nottingham Marcus Garvey Centre (9), and Birmingham Que Club (10)

Squarepusher Don't mess the son Jaz Paterson never had, along with his jaw-dropping rhythms, on tour in the UK this month. London Blue Note (29 April), Leeds Duxford Of York (14 May), Hull The Room (15), Sheffield Arches (16), Manchester Cyberia Club (7), Brighton Essential Music Festival (24)

Third Eye Foundation Matt Elliott infuses breakfast collage on tour, hooking up with Labradford and Gangster for last tour show. Brighton Concordia (3 May), Bristol Louisiana (4), Nottingham Sam Fay's (6), Manchester Roadhouse (7), Gargow King Tut's (8), London Druggists (10)

Middleton (Global Communications), Peter Nice Trio, Knights Of The Occasional Table, Prefrontal vs. Be Tronic, Mike Higgins, plus the usual tripped-out sets, shows, massage parlours, skulls and Internet. London Bagley's Warehouse, 9 May, 10pm-6am, £10, 011 344 0044

Don't Drink From The Mainstream New night hosted by Manchester's Mr Scruff, who'll be stretching out over three-hour sets of buffed-up beats and down-tempo funk. Manchester Victoria, Oxford Street, Thursdays from 15 May, 10pm-2am, £4/£3, 0161 273 3435

Kosmische Launch of the Can remix album *Sonicthe* with the group and various remixers in attendance. Plus DJ Robert Hampson and Kosmische lightshows. London Rhineland Club, Settle Place, off 361 Oxford Street, W1, 10pm-3am, £8, 011 629 5343

Motting Out A guest DJ and a guest organisation host the two rooms of *Sonicthe* in East London, the whole shebang overseen by those Mr Pinksters. This month: Ross Allen and Too Pure (1 May), DJ Wally and Clear Records (8), See (Disco) and Scratch (Grossbe) versus 15, Pressure Drop and Ultimate Dilemma (22), Jim Tenor and Club Head (29). London Smilefests, Thursdays, 10pm-2.30am, £4/£3, 0171 236 8112

Rumour Room Sonic eclectic with the resident Merry Pinksters plus JHQ

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1

Andy Serkiss Mondays 6.40-10.30pm (start Music from all quarters, folk, rock, reggae and more)

John Peel Tuesdays-Thursdays 6.40-10.30pm The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronic, dub and the legendary sessions

One In The Tangle Fridays 10pm-midnight Gertie D's provide hour-long breakbeat mix

Acid Nightingale Sundays 4-6am (chill, eclectic sounds for the space-crazier)

BBC Radio 2

Phong 9.30pm, 10.45-11.30pm Mark Russell and Robert Sandall's melting selection of avant-garde rock, jazz, contemporary classical, etc. This month: Brian Quinn's The Fun Forms in 15 May; plus live editor from Manchester Agent & Day Cafe, with Lantz and 608 State (26)

Hour And Nine Fridays 10-12.30pm Contemporary music, magazine, interviews, record reviews sessions. This month: Phil and Barry (2 May), Belfast Sonnettes Festival (9), Lonsdale in concert (16), Music Live 9.7 (27), Toller and Unleash (29 May), Manchester (29 May), London Soloneta play (30)

Impedance Saturdays 10.45pm-1am (modern rock, indie, alternative, 45 new and on record)

24/7s in session (10 May) plus Tony Davey, Andrew Schreier, David Gunningham (31)

Regional

BBC Derby

Soundscapes Sundays 3-5pm Ashley Furrill plays instrumental Electronic, contemporary dance/electronic music, New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Charlie Gillett Saturdays 10pm-12am rock, roots, soul, World Music, blues, R&B and more

BBC Longshore

On The Wire Saturdays 10pm-12am Steve Barker's seasoned New Music mix, dub, experimental electronics, outcasts, live tracks and more

BBC Merceade

The Late World House Fridays 12.30-2.30am DJ rock, psychedelia, jungle, avant-garde, warped Ambient and guitar jams in themed sequences

CHRNK (Milton Keynes)

The Garden Of Earthly Delights Fridays 1-3pm-Jamie Quinn's blend of avant-rock to electronic, techno, with some soultracks

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Paul Carr Saturdays 1-3pm Latest drum 'n' bass spun by Kenny Ken and DJ Hyde

Glue! It Up Saturdays 2-4pm Specially recorded sessions and in-studio appearances

Intelligent Drum 9-11pm Fridays 12-2am Fabio and Groovecutter mix on the air

Solid Steel Saturdays 1-3am Multi-track mix from Gals and the King crew

The Chill Out Zone Sundays 6-7am Paul Thomas's experimental Ambient, dub and Electronic mix

Gliss Popcorn Sundays 8-11pm Eclectic soul jazz improvisation plus Nu, and Old School electronic innovations

Kiss 102 FM (Manchester)

Paul Thompson Mondays 1-3pm Latest night soundtrack in a mixed-up, jungle style

No Intakes From 9-11pm Fridays 10-12am DJ Funk, Jungle with K&K and Marco

008 State Fridays midnight-Ton Saturday for the weekend from the wireless on

Alpha Waves Saturdays 4-6am Experimental, techno and isolationism with Stuart James

RTN1 (South London)

Shayn A & Nicole Sundays 9.10pm-12am John Kennedy spins out rock, dub, Electronic, experimental Ambient, HipHop, plus live studio jams

(Bessment Records, 4 May), Mass (Soma, 11), Gord (18) and DJ Shift (25). London Fitz & Frink, Great Portland Street, Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £15/£11 388 0588

Scratch New York's DJ Wally lays down some daddie beat, and there's analogue breakfast beats on decks and cassette players from Harpy, Wally, Vert, Pilky Boy and Annasid On Wheels - all from Brighton's nutty Spymans and Bovey's labels. Plus a special appearance by Isiah Jackson, new signing to Lu Records. London Spotz, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 15 May, 7pm-midnight, £6/£4, 0171 228 6616

The Spazw Live on-mixed set by Simon Fisher Turner, Daring from The Big Chills Pete

Lawrence, and the launch of Madhoo's *Chiller Killers* CD-ROM. London Cafe Internet, 22-24 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1, 29 May, 7-11.30pm, £3/£2.50, 0181 568 3145

Steady State Multimedia club night featuring a premier look at Hex Media's new Synosom remix software, plus music from DJ Vadim, Subatomic and Reg. Brighton Sound Gardens, 13 May, 10pm-2am, £5/£3.50, 01273 621805

21st Century Lounge New Scottish night for Moog modellers, bossa pop, Electro-lounge and cocktail jazz, hosted by DJ Mingo and guests Glasgow CCA Cafe Bar, tonight. Thursdays 10pm-11pm, Spemidnight, free £

Soundings items for the June issue should reach us by Friday 9 May



shapeshifter

Replacing his guitars and distortion boxes with a sampler and computer was, thinks Bristolian Matt Elliot, aka **Third Eye Foundation**, the best decision he ever made.
Interview by Simon Hopkins

Thanks to the serendipitous pursuit of late night TV chanki-topping, Matt Elliot has just had his first exposure to the music of Edward Varese, and appears both inspired and depressed by the experience. Here's someone who lived and died to make music, make new sounds," says the 23-year-old Bristol-based post-rocker-turned-musique-concrete experimentalist who records under the name Third Eye Foundation. "I keep thinking that it's so sad he died before the invention of the sampler. He would have loved it. How any kid can walk into a music shop and buy a sampler, and want to do things with it? They make a fucking House record! People are spoiled now. Varese had a passion for sound that no one has now."

Varese has been the source of more than one scales-from-eyes experience, of course, but it's somehow a little gratifying that it should cause Elliot his much-misapprehension as revelation: the new Third Eye Foundation album, *Ghost*, continues a musical trajectory that was directly inspired by his dissatisfaction with the music being produced by his contemporaries. "Whenever I release an album I think someone might beat me to it, because to be well, I want to do is so obvious. But it never happens."

Even in this time of spectacularly unifying audio hybrids, Elliot's music depicts a compelling tale of the unexpected.

It was the 1995 *Semtex* album, released on his own Linda's Strake

Variation label, that really did it, specifically "Sleep," the opening track, which sheets of guitar-generated white noise were suddenly lifted from shoegazer doom into a vocabulary drum 'n' bass breakbeat. A lack of about the circumstances surrounding his introduction to Jungle (a discrete Vancouver experience, which would transform his approach to music making).

"I lived in Montpellier [an area of Bristol with a large West Indian community] and just walking to work every day in this summer, everyone's got their windows open. I'd walk along hearing this shit bass—no drums, hardly anything else—and some *boom* going. 'Whoaaa! Whoaaa!' And I thought that it was a real expression of the inner city. That's how I got into Jungle, though I ended up looking in the wrong places and found Olm-Trio and lightweight stuff like that."

Elliot might have been drawn in by Jungle's pressure cooker intensity, or the aesthetic complexity, but he was also fascinated by the potential of the music's technology. While he was a member of Bristol's local drone-rock outfit Flying Saucer Attack, he would try to subvert the almost folkish tones of fellow-jemmer Dave Pearce. "On the first [FSA] album, the tracks I was most into were the weirder ones, not the songy ones," he says, emphasizing that he still thinks Pearce's liking for lo-fi recording (to this day FSA record exclusively onto multi-track analogue cassettes), "Lo-fi for the sake of it? I just don't get it. Lo-fi blues, lo-fi funk, music from the 20s: they didn't have a choice, although of course the music *is* there through. By way of contrast, he does musicians who take the most basic technology to extremes, such as Crescent, another Bristol group. 'Give them an instrument,' he says, 'and they'll play it like it's meant to be played for five minutes, get bored, then try to do other stuff with it. Not enough people do that.'"

For Elliot, the sampler is now "the greatest technical invention the technology has gone as far as it can. There's no excuse. I've never had an anti-keyboards thing. I'm too far anything. I can't stand people who say they can't listen to

music made on a sequencer. There are things you can do with a sequencer you just can't physically do, no matter how good a musician you are. And the sampler..."

Following the paradigm shift of *Semtex*, the tracks on *Ghost* represent another new departure. The drum 'n' bass rhythms are still there, albeit stretched into elastic superstretches that whip through the soundfield, but the feedback-drenched guitars and bunched song structures, the last vestiges of his rock origins, are gone. Instead, samples of arctic European and African folk recordings rub shoulders with unidentifiable soups, clicks and shrieks. Had Elliot and his then girlfriend and collaborator on *Ghost*, Deborah Parsons, made a conscious decision to incorporate these musique concrete techniques? "Not really. I don't think I need a sampler. I just go round, or Debbie did, taping hundreds of things—chairs, doors, anything—then listen back to tapes and take stuff I like. Generally it's not like a process; it just happens. I don't consciously think of anything when I'm doing a track. I just cook about for a bit and what comes out comes out. I start with one sound—a drum beat, a sample—and go from there. It gets finished when I'm bored of doing it."

He's being modest, if the results on *Ghost* are anything to go by. Where *Semtex* sounded thrillingly out of joint, the new album is genuinely unique. "It's the first record I've done that I wanted to listen to straight away," he concedes, "though naturally I think I've got better work to do."

"It's become a cliché," he says, referring to the current drum 'n' bass "fraternity." "They're calling Squarepusher 'too white' because he doesn't use the right samples. To me, he's one of the few people doing anything that's new. For me Jungle is about more than just sound; it's about the fact that people are taking rhythms, cutting them up and putting them back together in a way not done before. Find you, it's not always the musicians; it's more the people working up the scene. This you can't see a lot of hangers-on. It's not like people I'm angry at."

But he's got an affinity with the land of hardcore, minimalist drum 'n' bass being produced by Bristol-based operators such as Roni Size, DJ Krush, the Full Crew, and Ope Brown labels? "No. I'm running as far away from all scenes as I possibly can. Whenever I've been in one I've been horribly let down."

For Matt Elliot, working in isolation appears to be a personal imperative rather than a pragmatic choice. One of his most extraordinary tracks is "Way Out Like Dave Bowman," from last year's remix album in Varese. The piece features samples of his own walk, with FSA mutated into a venomous depiction of Bowman—the hero of the film 2001: A Space Odyssey— "isolated in deep space. 'No other film ever comes closer,'" enthuses Elliot, "it's so big, so huge, and it's a happy ending! My favorite bit is him in deep space, billions of miles from anyone. From then on that's what I was attempting to do with my music." Appropriately, the long UK tour which Elliot sets out on the month will feature him alone on stage. "Well, no, my sequencer, my DAT and a mixer. I'm happy on my own."

Although it has only just been released, the music on *Ghost* is nearly a year old. Where is his current (in)aternal going? "I personally never want to make two records that sound the same. And so far I feel I've done a pretty good job. That's why Tricky's so great. Did you ever hear two Tricky songs that were the same?"

Much of the music he's been making since last summer has been influenced by his new girlfriend, a classical string player. He's been taking samples of her string quartet and working with them in the sequencer. He describes the rhythmic but drumless results as "mellow, girlfriend-influenced," but given that he describes Ghost as "nice and mellow and called out," it's anyone's guess as to how it sounds. He's also just recorded a single, which he regards as a closure of sorts. "I thought I'd do the fastest, loudest, most extreme and horrible thing I can, then not do it again." *Ghost* is out now on *Daring through Veils*. For details of this month's Third Eye Foundation tour, see Soundings.



A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month...

New York

The Boze 9 7 4 *Symmetry In Prime Time When Centered Above And Below The Lowest Tern Primes In The Range 288 to 224 With The Addition Of 279 And 261 In Which The Half Of The Symmetric Division Mapped Above And Including 288 Consists Of The Powers Of 2 Multiplied By The Primes Within The Ranges Of 144 To 128, 72 To 64 And 36 To 32 Which Are Symmetrical To Those Primes In Lowest Terns In The Half Of The Symmetric Division Mapped Below And Including 224 Within The Ranges 126 To 112, 63 To 56 And 31 To 28 With The Addition Of 119*

That is the title of the LaMonte Young piece which is the sound half of the Sound and Light Environment (referred to as "a time installation measured by a setting of continuous frequencies in sound and light") put together with his wife — visual artist Marian Zazeela, his collaborator of 35 years — at New York's tiny MELA (Music, Eternal Light Art) Foundation. Anyone who cares passionately about the mathematical basis of Young's music thus has enough information to parse out the specifics of the overtones at play here. The programme helpfully notes that it is "a periodic composite sound waveform environment created from sine wave components generated digitally in real-time on a custom-designed Rayna interval synthesizer". But just as it is possible to enjoy a Western serial composition without knowing the tone row, Young's music can offer a vast range of auditory experiences even to folks who can't manage the arithmetic required to balance their cheques/books.

As far back as the mid-60s, Young and Zazeela were

creating complex installations under the banner The Theatre Of Eternal Music, so it is reasonable to view this current work as part of an ongoing continuum rather than an isolated, one-off event.

Before entering the installation, visitors are asked to remove their shoes. Nearly everything inside is white, including the carpeting. Or rather, it would be white, but for the red and blue lights which are an integral part of Zazeela's pieces, which play with dimensionality via shadows and colour. In the larger front room two pairs of circular cut-outs, bands three inches thick and cut down the middle, hang from the ceiling. Facing each pair are a red spotlight and a blue spotlight. The shadows behind the cut-outs are the opposite colour of the light facing them. There is thick but transparent pink plastic over the windows, so outside light entering is also pink. In the smaller back room, where almost no natural light enters because it's blocked by neighbouring buildings, the plastic appears black and reflective. In that room there is a mostly red Oriental rug on the floor. On one wall is a relief sculpture entitled *Rune Window 1992* which is like a two-dimensional drawing come to three-dimensional life. Again there are red and blue spotlights shining on it from different angles, casting different-coloured shadows which vary in size depending on the angle of viewing.

The effect of the music is based on a paradox: The tones generated are constant, but the listener's perception of them is not. The slightest movement of one's head, and thus one's ears, alters the dominance of particular overtones, of which there is a huge number. The frequencies are low and high, with seemingly a huge gap in the middle, the higher overtones are quite close together, yet because all of them are not heard equally at one time, the overall

effect is somewhat chord-like. The only way to hear a constant sound here is to be perfectly still. Listeners are thus engaged in a sort of interactivity: they can't choose what to hear, but they control when it changes, and how often. Everyone can experience the sounds differently. A couple enter and at first they jog around the room, then lie flat on the floor. Eventually they take turns standing on their heads. I slowly roll my head on my neck, adding a chiropractic element. Some people seem to meditate, but though the sound consists of drones, and meditation in one consistent position would keep the perceived sound constant, the sonic environment doesn't really seem conducive to meditation, as with many of Young's compositions, the upper frequencies are harshly dissonant and the lower frequencies mesh into a pounding rhythm.

I don't know if the sculpture is intended to be interactive, but my gentle pushes set the hanging circles swinging and seem to match the effect of the sound. The most stunning "does she intend this?" effect comes at sunset, however. It has been a rainy day, and there are thick clouds in the sky. In the spaces between them, the light (its perception affected, of course, by the pink plastic on the west-facing windows) is pink/orange, the clouds are purple/blue. It is a magnificent, if temporary, corollary to Zazeela's work. Given Young's predilection for natural tuning, and claims that his music is inspired by the sounds of the wind and the sea, it seems unlikely that an effect of nature, as mirrored in miniature in the installation, is entirely unplanned. Art is as all-encompassing as we allow it to be. **STEVE HOLTE** The installation can be viewed on Thursdays and Saturdays, 2pm-midnight, until the end of June at The MELA Foundation, 3rd Floor, 275 Church Street (near Franklin Street), New York, USA. Tel: 001 212 925 8270.

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bites



Kelli Hand Night drives thru Babylon

Forget Halloween: the strangest and most chilling annual urban ritual in the Western world occurs on 30 October in Detroit and goes by the name of Devil's Night. Across the rest of the U.S. Devil's Night is the excuse for basically harmless mischief like blazing cars with shaving cream or egg houses, but in Detroit it's the night that the city goes up in flames. When the arson spree was at its height in the mid-80s several hundred houses each year were burned to the ground in an inexplicable pyrotechnic frenzy. "Where's the darkness from?" asks Kelli Hand, a Detroit Techno producer whose audio signatures — bombed-out funk grooves, vicious synth-stabs, oscillating riffs that hit like afterthought — mirror the brutal atmosphere of a city that was once the murder capital of North America. "Detroit is a hard-edged city with all the crime, but you get used to it actually," she continues. "There's a lot of stuff that goes on and it keeps you on edge, you've got to look over your shoulder every five minutes. I think that shows up in the music."

It's become something of a cliché to note that Detroit is a city that is almost completely ignorant of the electronic music that has grown up in the shadows of its disused auto factories. "I think that most of the people in Detroit who know about Techno are friends of the people involved," Kelli says with resignation. "There are a lot of Europeans who come here, but people always like something that comes from somewhere else!" I think marketing has a lot to do with it. I think it's getting better because there are bigger labels who are getting better distribution and getting some of our music in the main stores."

Of course, anonymity is not the only obstacle to wider recognition. Hand is one of the few women making music

in the playground of Techno's boys' club. "Getting started was the hard part," she explains. "A lot of people don't think that I was serious. After a few years go by and you keep putting productions out I think that makes the difference. Right now people know that I'm serious. A lot of my stuff is hard-edged. I really don't think it matters whether it's a female or a male producing this type of music as long as it's good music."

In addition to her new 'very dark, but very danceable, groovy type Techno' album *Ready For The Darkness*, Kelli's Acacia label is up to its 33rd release. Via Acacia she has released gem-hard tracks like "Global Warning," as well as the gorgeous "K2 K4," a homage to Manuel Gottsching's Music Institute classic, "E2 E4." She has two EPs coming out on Brooklyn's Digital Hut and Hard Edge imprints, a House album on Diffusion out of Germany, and the K Hand Project 5 EP on Acacia. "What I usually do is sit in front of the keyboard and play around and listen to a lot of music — most everything but Country — and go from there, and whatever comes off the top of my head if it sounds good gets recorded," she says of the working process responsible for her prodigious output. "I think that being an artist there's all types of things that go on in the sound in your head, just sitting in front of the computer and playing around. It's all a creative thing and it comes from within."

Unlike most of her colleagues, she doesn't regard her music as a soundtrack for the post-human future. "I'm focused on what's going on right now," she suggests. "I don't really think about tomorrow until the day is over. I may not even be here tomorrow, so... The only thing I can do is make music for today and hope that it carries on into the future. Hopefully, the future will be all robots, well not us, but mostly machines and more science fiction. Like *The Jetsons* on TV." **PETER SHAPIRO**
Ready For The Darkness is available on K7 through RHYXSCO. Acacia, PO Box 32854, Detroit, Michigan 48232, USA, e-mail: acacia313@aol.com

Tipsy Lounge lizards

"We're not part of the cocktail nation, we should make that clear." Dave Gardner and Tim Degalla, the duo behind *Tipsy*, are emphatic when it comes to assigning a genre to the music on their debut album *Trip Tease*. The duo's rabid sampling of kitsch vinyl and B-movie soundtracks from the 50s, 60s and 70s may seem like cashing in, given the huge success of neo-lounge/cocktail music in the US, but the duo are keen to point out, they've been doing this for a long time and there's more to *Tipsy* than retro pastiche. "I prefer the term 'pop instrumental'," says Dave, hinting at a passion for instrumental supermarket music.

If their clothing is any indication, they're certainly not jumping on the cocktail bandwagon. Tim is dressed in a shell suit (left over from a breakdancing obsession), Dave wears jeans, a creased short-sleeve shirt with bed-head to match. *Trip Tease* employs many Easy Listening/Space Age/Bachelor Pad quirks — eerie string glissandos, space-age organ and keyboard interjections, Esquevel-style novelty sounds, Latin percussion, ethereal voicing, Hawaiian guitar slides — but it's mixed with 70s basslines, horns, HiHop beats and a host of other undefinable sounds. "It's not so much a copy but the sort of how things were done back then," suggests Naut Humon, *Trip Tease*'s executive producer and the owner of the group's record label, Asphodel.

The group's choice of track titles reveals their immersion in West Coast trash culture. "Faud Ramses" is a direct homage to the lead character in *Roméo Fest*. "He's a psychotic Eggplant who has a nefarious plot to bring back the ancient goddesses by butchered various people," explains Dave, a film school drop-out. The title of "Liquored" is derived from the name of a San Francisco off-license, formerly known as the Liquorediceatessen before part of its sign fell off. "Crimbar" is a local Tenderlon drinking establishment. "Nude On The Moon" is another movie reference about astronauts who discover a nudist colony. "We've always been inspired by the music in films, especially the less reputable ones," says Dave.

Tipsy's lo-fi pop abstractions are a product of the Bloody Angle Compound, an out-of-the-way studio built on abandoned State Park land on the edge of San Francisco. Run by Humon, a veteran of the city's late-60s art and music avant-garde, the Compound was once a performance space, and is now home to an elaborate recording system called Sound Traffic Control (a sophisticated process of live musical cutting and pasting), more conventional digital multi-tracking equipment as well as original analogue boards salvaged from the early days of the studio. Experimental music was the original meeting point.



PHOTO: GUY AROCH/ONYX

for Digulga and Gardner. As a teenager from the San Francisco suburbs, Tim, whose New Age parents listened to Tangerine Dream, discovered a taste for Krautrock and mixing disco with noise. He met Dave, also a Bay Area native and member of several AmbientIndustrial projects, at a warehouse space in the city, where he was mixing lounge with experimental music as part of a fringe sound event. Meeting Humon provided the springboard for their first recordings. "I used to multi-track using cassette decks 'stupid,'" Tim laughs. "It boosted up our level of technology a step," says Dave, ironically, of their relationship with the Compound. The Topsy sound was engineered by mixing live samples provided by the likes of Mr Bungle's Trevor Dunn, Joe Gore (PJ Harvey/Tom Waits) and many others, then combining them with vinyl fragments.

The material on *Trip Tease* is a couple of years old, and has already been versioned by New York's Illibit no We, more variations are in the works including a complete *Trip Tease* remix album. In keeping with their love of vinyl, most Topsy recordings will be released on LP with more sporadic CD productions.

Next on the agenda, however, is how to translate the recorded material to a live arena. Topsy's live project, *Tipsylandia*, is soon to debut in Los Angeles and New York. They eschew conventional notions of group performance. Instead, the live show will be a sort of sonic banquet with Topsy machines, instruments and musicians dropping by. "Topsylandia can fit in different environments," says Humon. "In weird restaurants, galleries — some of the Topsy music in the future could work in a Walgreens [a local superstore] as well as in a bar." "I want to appeal to people in the suburbs," proclaims Dave. Tim agrees: "I want to do things which are futuristic, too. Not just a blast from the past." **LAURA CONNELLY** *Trip Tease is out now on Asphodel (through SRD)*

Spaceheads

Two pale boys

The Spaceheads have long been the flies in the ointment, mixing up definitions of improvisation, trance, dub and rock. Music scene contaminants, their deluge of puns has spawned some fine happy-floppy music since their formation in 1990. Though only a duo, their sound is bodied out by trumpeter Andy Diagram's ancient harmoniser and echo units. Richard Harrison's drums are typically accompanied by a looped bassline and broad, blurred trumpet flourishes. The resulting music — the latest example of which can be heard on *Round The Outside* — ranges from ammic space-sounds to (with the aid of a piece of metal sheeting) grating noise.

"The idea of looping dirty noises as well as nice brass parts comes from dance music," says Andy. "I like the idea of using noise dynamically so it's not like that non-stop. You can have bursts of that and then go into something quite sweet and melodic. It's more powerful than just banging away at one thing. As a trumpet player, I don't restrict myself to making trumpet noises. Vocalising is an important part of my playing. I sing into a pitch-shifter and up it an octave, with slight modulation so it warbles like an opera singer."

Both Andy and Richard cite the joyful noise of South African jazz in the 1970s — Duda Pukwana's Spear, Chris McGregor, Louis Moholo — as an important influence. A similar combination of experimentation with exuberance animates their music; other reference points might include Can, the Ed Blackwell/Don Cherry duo, folk music, Lester Bowie and club culture. But they don't quite fit with any coterie, positioning themselves in a lonely spot that insists on accessible, spontaneous music.

Both Spaceheads members have long, involved careers behind them. In the early 80s they were members of Manchester's post-punk/electronics Dislocation Dance, and later in the decade worked as part of Nico's backing band. Diagram played with the group James for a while, wearing a dress onstage at megapages when *Madchester* was at its height, and helping fund strappy free-jazz outfit The Honkies with the proceeds. Then there is Diagram's vital role in the resurgent career of ex-Pere

Ubu frontman David Thomas via his 2 Pale Boys project.

Harrison, the older of the two, remembers being fired by jazz in the 1960s. "There used to be a thing called Jazz Club on BBC2," Ronnie Scott used to do it and it used to have people like Thelonious Monk, Tony Oxley and Derek Bailey. Some of it was pretty free. I'd never come across anything like Monk. It was just a lot more earthy than seeing someone like Oscar Peterson in a formal, fish manner. This dirty, joyful stuff was a real inspiration."

For Diagram, jazz was briefly supplanted by punk. He was at school, living with Django Bates, playing trumpet and doing an A-level in music at the time. "Me and some friends were being outrageous at school and getting into jazz, that was our rebellion. And then punk happened. I loved it and all my jazz friends didn't." This meant ditching trumpet for bass guitar and the formation of The Diagram Brothers.

The punk influence wasn't just a musical one. The Spaceheads operation is a model of small-scale independence and control. Their London gigs are relatively rare because they tour so much in Europe and the US, surviving on tiny budgets, staying with concert organisers and shuttling around a network of friendly groups built up over the years. They share with the Dutch-based groups The Ex and The Dog-Faced Hermans (with whom they were associated in The Honkies years) an affiliation to a vibrant, non-mediated European scene.

After 17 years of playing together the future looks more open-ended than ever. Forthcoming is an album featuring remixes by Tortoise and Stock, Hansen & Walkman. They're hoping to build on a recent collaboration with Max Eastley, and they've also recorded with a bagpipe player — just to muddy the waters a little more. "Improved music is what we do," says Andy. "It doesn't have to be spiky and unmelodic. The idea that you can improvise compositions with structures and verses and choruses and melodies is just as valid to me, and in some ways more exciting. Even though it ends up sounding like a song it actually is an improvisation." **WILL MONTGOMERY** *Round The Outside is out now on These Records (through These)*





Susie Ibarra

Percussion discussion

26-year-old Susie Ibarra is soft-spoken but friendly, seemingly more interested in interviewing the interviewer about how he began writing and how far his musical abilities extend than in promoting herself or promulgating a personal philosophy. Though it goes some way towards explaining why this is the first print interview with a drummer causing a stir in New York, such charming (and unusual) lack of self-promotion has not hindered her meteoric rise in the downtown free jazz community, where she provides the rhythmic spark for groups led by tenor saxophonist David S. Ware, bassist William Parker, tenor saxophonist Assaf Tishar (her husband), trumpeter Roy Campbell, and the Wilber Morris-founded collective quintet One World Ensemble.

Her stature was cemented by appearances with scene kingpin John Zorn's Masada at the end of last year, substiting two nights for the indisposed Joey Baron. Ibarra has made remarkable progress for a musician whose career path seems almost accidental — though destined also comes to mind as she allows the matter-of-fact details to be dragged out of her.

"I always had music around me," she says, "but it wasn't like I was thinking of being a musician, and I

didn't start playing drums until pretty recently, like ten years ago. But once I started playing drums, I couldn't stop playing. It was really exceedingly out of the blue. I just saw someone play and thought, yeah, that's what I wanna do. Ten days after I got a set, I was in a [rock] band, and I just started playing. And then about a year later, I decided, yeah, I want to be a drummer."

Asked how such an innocuous background led into free jazz, she responds with uproarious laughter. "Oh, it doesn't seem obvious? When I came to New York, I'd heard jazz and stuff. I knew a little bit of Miles and Monk, Coltrane, not well then, but I liked it, and then the first band I saw live, because I knew a little bit about them, was Sun Ra. I saw them at Sweet Basil's. That big band on that tiny stage. And I dragged, like, three girlfriends out to see them [who] don't even listen to jazz. 'You gotta come to this show!' They were swinging so hard, just hit me really strong. And I got to talk to some of the musicians, and I started studying with the drummer, Buster Smith. So it kind of just happened."

Probably her most important mentor, however, was the great Milford Graves, whom she credits with focusing her interests. His influence on her style is also apparent if not overwhelming. Ibarra more than meets the challenge of free jazz drumming, which is to play intuitive pulses but not a definable meter. Her playing suggests organic, evolving processes, and her predilection for miscellaneous percussion, including seed-pod shakers and small cymbals and gongs played on the drum heads, is seen in a new light when she reveals her experiences performing Japanese and Balinese gamelan and Filipino Kulintang (Ibarra was born in Anaheim, California and raised in Texas, but her parents are Filipino). A few years ago her drumming, though fascinatingly original, lacked the sheer muscularity required to stand alongside the most forceful free players, now she can hold her own with even Ware's juggernaut onslaughts. Yet she maintains a distinct talent for restraint, able to decorate quiet, free ballads with a huge variety of discreet, pontilic sounds.

Zorn is also a forceful personality, if not, on also say, the decibel powerhouse that Ware is. At a March 20 performance with Ibarra at New York's Knitting Factory, the percussionist didn't seem entirely comfortable. Certainly Zorn delighted in her flexibility and use of space, but unlike his fragmentary jump-cut style with Naked City, or Masada's more organized Omotie Coleman and Hezner influenced pieces, Zorn's free improv also stylings on that night found him working out ideas at length, so Ibarra got to react in a series of ways to each sound block, punctuating their musical discourse with commas and semicolons, displaying a great sonic sensitivity. When I ask her how she went about fitting into the Masada group, she laughs. "You know what's funny? Everybody adjusted for me!" **STEVE HOLZJE** Recent albums on which Ibarra can be heard include David S. Ware's *Godspeeded* (JDM), Assaf Tishar's *Shekhina* (Eremite), William Parker's *In Order to Survive* (Compassion Zones), *Bed-Stuy* (Honested), *Later this year there will be albums by The One World Ensemble (Freedom) and Assaf Tishar Trio (Silhouette)*

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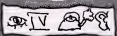
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House On Mars

neue deutsche wellen

Cologne and Düsseldorf are hotbeds of musical activity. A loose community of musicians, label owners, club runners and sonic theorists is building on the legacies of Can, Kraftwerk and DAF, creating the electronic soundtrack for a united Europe. Rob Young meets the stars of *seltener gehörte Musik*: **Mouse On Mars**, **Mike Ink**, **Dr Walker**, **A-Musik**, **Pluramon** and more

'Seltener gehörte Musik'. It means 'seldom heard music', and it defines the music policy at Liquid Sky Cologne, a former Persian disco in the centre of this lively city close to the French border. Since opening in August 1996, this long, thin bar and its listening room, complete with graffitied blue walls, has become a nexus for an extraordinary synergy of musical activities which have been bubbling away in Cologne for some years now, and which are finally surfacing via a number of mainly underground, self-financing record labels, record shops, collaborative networks, gigs, and ambitious festivals planned for the rest of this year.

To penetrate this scene, there's no better place to start than Liquid Sky, which rolls out every night. On the decks tonight is Georg Odijk, the unassuming manager of A-Musik, which is both label and a tiny shop in the heart of Cologne's Belgian Quarter. Earlier in the evening, as Georg realised he was late for the DJ date, I watched as he plucked records almost at random from his stocid nevertheless, he weaves them into an incredibly-paced, arrhythmical set that glides from Webern string quartet serialism to electroacoustic drones, ultra-woozy dubs from Lee Perry (Black Ark period) and

Scientist, deep pulsing Teutonica from Germany and Austria, Ennio Morricone, Godflesh, Jim O'Rourke/Derek Bailey-style acoustic plucking. What's more, I don't see any disapproving glances from the assembled club goers; no one asks him to play something they can dance to or attempts to pull the plug. The only criticism, he tells me the following day, came from the management. "They said it was not curious enough. They told me, 'Your job is to make it more strange!'"

Maybe this is isn't so surprising: the manager, after all, happens to be Ingrid Koch, aka Dr Walker, one half of German Techno outfit Air Liquide and participant in any number of rolling Electronica projects involving such Transatlantic co-conspirators as Jambin 133, Khan, Frank Heis and even Holger Czukay. Even among his closest collaborators, Walker has a reputation as something of a loose cannon. "The whole thing with Liquid Sky is about communication," he tells me. "It's not about being alone; if you come in the club here and sit on your own for four hours, you're, like, master of disaster." The music that gets aired here is loose, improvised, exploratory, distorted, 'fucked up'; the lounge atmosphere promotes interaction, commingling, networking, all reflected in the Friday night live improvised collaborations, like the



Mouse On Mars

Mike Ink

Georg Odijk at Liquid Sky

Frank Schultze

Holger Czornyj

Schlammpeitziger

AUSTERN

Browsing at A-Musik

Wolfgang Schürmüller

hour marathon featuring Walker, Holger Czukay, The Bonart (aka Jörg Burger) and Frank Hess that happened the previous week. "I want psychedelic trip parties," says Walker. "The good thing is that the people from Cologne, they are party people, they want to go out, they want to drink Kolisch [the locally-brewed beer], they want to get fucked up, they want to kiss each other. It's insane, but it's big fun."

In this most recent century of Cologne's 2000 year history, musical innovation is nothing new. One of the first electronic music studios, WDR, was inaugurated here in the early 1950s by Stockhausen's circle. Can's Inner Space Studio lies half an hour outside the city, and Speer, Germany's biggest alternative music and culture magazine, is sited just around the corner from A-Musik. The journal's longest-serving freelancer, Joachim Odj, remembers hearing the world premiere of Stockhausen's epic *Hymnen* at WDR on the day he moved to the city. Half an hour in a different direction, in neighbouring Düsseldorf, DAF left their mark on 80s Electronica — and of course there's Kraftwerk's mysterious Kling Klang studio. Now, with electronic music firmly in the mainstream, Germany united, and Europe on the brink of full-scale union, it's easier than ever for undergrounds to become overgrounds in the blink of an eye. Cologne's set to be the next.

The three main triangulation points for mapping the lie of the city's musical land are all independent record shops. A-Musik is no bigger than an average bathroom, but if you want anything by Xenakis, or CDs of computer music, Nina Tanne 12's drum 'n' bass imports, US post-rock, this is the place to visit. The shop adjoins Odj's flat, which he happens to share with Jan St. Werner of Mouse On Mars and Microtonal, and Markus Schmickler, a composition student who, as Pluramond, released the excellent *Rock Up Canyon* CD on Mille Plateaux last year. A few streets away, Delirium sells specialist Techno, House and Electronica, the apartment and studio upstairs are inhabited by Mike Ink, whose profile as a major German Techno force is rapidly rising. And further away in the twin-spired shadow of the gargantuan Gothic Dom cathedral lies Normal, a rock/indie collector's paradise run by Thomas Stege, owner of the Finlayson Tonträger label. Home to a large variety of curious, leftfield indie/post-punk acts over the last seven or eight years, the label is most notable for issuing rock/motors/sampling pieces like *Genf* and *Workshop* — both of whom record in the Can Studio — as well as Düsseldorf's Kreidler.

Backstage at A-Musik, I'm talking to Jo, a fish-loving, very figure in his early thirties whose recordings for A-Musik rejoice under the name Schlammpeitzger. His *Freundlichbarockdomoeloideloidig* LP unconsciously tunes into the recurring vibrations left by early German synth groups like Cluster, Harmonia and Ash Ra Tempel, though Jo claims never to have heard of them until 1993. With him is bespectacled Felix, aka FX Randomz, a comically self-deprecating synth buffon whose 1992 duo album with Jan Werner, *Slow*, released on Werner's tiny Geführe label, is an unsung electronic masterpiece, an outstanding pre-Oval example of capzsed sampling virtuosity. Together, Jo and Felix work as Holosud, using a formidable collection of old and new keyboards, drum machines, cheap samplers and home-built instruments including the U-gitch, a fretless 'guitar' played with the aid of Q-tips.

"I came from the early 80s," says Jo, "early electronics. Chris and Cosy. Then there was a big break, there was nothing I made my music. Then came these boom-boom-boom Techno parties. I came from funky and Electro parties. Then they changed — Techno became strong, the beats go down, not always boom-boom, and now the situation is really good. Yesterday I died at Liquid Sky I played 80s Electro, new electronic music, and gave the people a chance to open their eyes. This is the time, now I can get in again, so I have my party time a second time. I like it a lot."

Holosud's forthcoming EP on A-Musik captures the distinctions between hi- and lo-fi. Jo's bargain-basement synth meets Felix's intricate sampling techniques head-on. There is already a strain of DIY, gatesque aesthetics alive in the city, exemplified by local folk hero Harald "Sack" Ziegler, a musician with a place in the affections of everyone we meet, and who has released a vast number of small-run recordings of

wheeling, Ivor Cutler-esque instrumental whimsy.

The Holosud record was recorded quickly and cheaply, with a virtue made of digital 'mistakes' and distortions. Felix explains the aesthetics at play. "For me it's not so much using trash tools, but I try to get trash out of the equipment I have. One example: when we made the *Slow* record, I had this Roland sampler where you can scratch through the sample to find the point where you can cut it. We took this, and Jan sampled it with his sampler, and we made something of it. Things like that, using tools in a different way, searching for the bugs and using the bugs I like distortions. I like sounds that really kill your speakers. That's my understanding of trash."

Jo met Georg Odj while the latter was playing in Kontakta, an improvising/instrument-building performance group that used turntables and wave generators alongside bowed metal plates and found objects. The group's single recorded legacy — a CD on the French label Odd Size — reveals an amazing longform process music like a dubwise Morphogenesis. Odj, whom Jo describes, bizarrely, as "the big mother of this scene, with breast enough to feed all of us", resists the notion that his contribution to the Cologne scene is significant, but there's no doubt that it's having an impact. Locals like Walker, Drome's Bernd Friedmann and even Holger Czukay all name the A-Musik label as one of their favourites. Yet Georg's label philosophy has more in common with, say, the early days of ESP-Disk with its 'artists-in-control' rubric. "I see myself as a catalyst," he says. "I just bring it out — artists have to decide how their cover will be, even if I don't like it. Until now I never had a problem." Kontakta's line-up also included schoolfriends Markus Schmickler, Carsten (C-) Schultz, and Frank Dormert, whose Enterpuff! label peddles a variety of intriguing electroacoustic and improv projects.

“ Searching for the bugs and using the bugs. I like distortions. I like sounds that really kill your speakers ”

A-Musik's current releases include a Schlammpeitzger remix 10" featuring House On Mars, C-Schultz, FX Randomz and Sweet Reinhard, the Holosud EP, an FX Randomz EP, and a CD by keyboard group LÖH. But the next full-length CD, Markus Schmickler's *Wab Sabi*, is set to extend the range of the label catalogue into the realm of hard-bitten digital composition. "It's different from the others, to show that it's not just a lo-fi electronic label," Georg says.

So, to Schmickler's Kaspar-Hauser Studio to investigate. Schmickler is one of the most guarded interviewees I've encountered, and cuts a fairly solitary figure — he spends much of his working day dozed away in a huge, disused warehouse on the east side of the Rhine, surrounded by piles of industrial debris, gant coils of wire and mountains of forlorn pallets. The two large rooms that comprise his workspace are the only spaces occupied in the building.

The engine of Kaspar Hauser, celebrated in film by Werner Herzog, now appears as a gaudy mythos for today's German Electronica, with its story of the child who appears out of nowhere, origin unknown, having to define his place in an unfamiliar and hostile world. Force Inc/Mille Plateaux label boss Achim Szepanski has discussed electronic culture in terms of schizotheory. "Since the 50s, in *musique concrète*, later in rock, in the industrial music up to Techno, one heard diverse noises, screaming, chirping, creaking, hissing: actually all noises that one related more to madness. With the mechanical production of these noises it became clear that madness itself is a metaphor for these techniques. Techno is also schizo music in the sense that it deconstructs certain rules and forms that pop music imposed on the sounds, on the other hand it has to invent rules itself."

Markus Schmickler's sleeve notes to *Wab Sabi* reference Japanese philosophy, placing the music and musician as a small part in a cultural macrocosm. "Sab" — to be lonely, quiet, abandoned, to surrender, to decay, to age and accumulate experiences and insights, to be antique and beautiful. To get rusty and show patina. What one calls *wabi* is imperfect, lacks autonomy and the desire to its completion."

The auteur behind *Wab Sabi* and Pluramond also operates as something of an

isolationist. "The name of my studio is very old," says Schmickler. "It was from the image of a closed room, and developing something which in the first place happens in these four walls. And working there day and night, not recognising if it's day or night, outside." A student in composition at a local academy, he also finds himself isolated in the grey space between a 'New Music' culture which considers 1920s serialism the peak of 20th century musical achievement, and the present generation for whom 'DJ culture' and phonography run in the blood. "A teacher of mine says, I don't care if a CD is good medium to send the music around the world and show it to other people, he says the score is also a possibility to do that. But there are so many scores, and there's not really a forum for them."

To get to grips with much of what's going on in German Electronica, it's important to understand the (metaphysical) concept of *Rauschen*. "One is permanently surrounded by the *Rauschen* of the world and its objects," wrote Gilles Deleuze in an essay called *This Evening, A Concert Will Take Place*. "With more sensitive ears one would sink in a sea of *Rauschen*." Referring to the chaotic chaos of molecular



Schmauspeltzger (left) with FX Randoniz

collisions in the physical world, Deleuze implies that all sound-based art inevitably encodes traces of the ongoing subatomic violence. It's a notion that provides a rubber grip on the notched and buried musics of Microstona, Mouse On Mars and Schmickler himself. *Act Up Canyon* was a fascinating exercise in recombining the sounds of traditionally 'rock' instruments, with Schmickler playing guitar and drums in his studio and then morphing them into a series of tone-paintings drenched in metallic and gunmetal hues, while Can drummer Jaki Liebeck makes an all-too-brief appearance on the shortest track, "Peak."

Wob Sabr is composed mainly with synthesizers, found radio sound and computer manipulations. Beginning with a high-frequency passage worthy of Ryoji Ikeda, the music accumulates in a crescendo of sonic affluents, dying down imperceptibly into nothing. "For me, at least, form is one of the most interesting areas in thinking about music," says Schmickler, "because computer technology gives you new possibilities to think about form: to stretch and compress time, for example — these are options which you don't have when you just compose for instruments."

Fired by the writings of Dutch philosopher Willem Flusser, Schmickler's grand design is to explore whether "you can explain things with sound", and like almost everyone we met in Cologne, he eagerly awaits the fusion of Europe's nation states. "I'm not really sure what definitely will change at this point, but I'm really excited about it. I think in the area of music, or films, or design or whatever, the borders don't exist anyway. But I'm really for the exchange, and the openness I'm not the guy who wants to keep specific, local characteristics."

Walk a few streets away from the A-Musik HQ to Delirium Records, and you'll hear a different opinion. From offices and a studio flat occupying the two floors above the shop, the master of minimal Techno Mike Ink runs his labels Profan and Studio 1, and records the music he puts out as Love Inc. (a huge hit album in

Germany last year on Force Inc.). Gas (on Mike Plateaux), and Polka Trax (on Warp), plus collaborations with his friend Jörg Burger (their *Los Vegas* LP is on Harvest/EMI Germany), and his brother (Sweet) Reinhard. Mike Ink's music is, as he puts it, "combining the steady bass drum with my personal idea of German soul Techno." His particular trick is to take the downward weight out of the repetitive 4/4 drum pattern of trance, and make it skim like a stone on water. The best examples of this technique can be found on the Studio 1 compilation and his solo Gas project (pronounced with the German long 'A'), where the beats are popped out regular as a tennis machine under grumpy synth drones over 15 minute durations. His *Love Inc.* album, meanwhile, is a light-hearted homage to his musical loves, conspicuously sampling Miles Davis, Scott Pollak, Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream and Marc Bolan.

Ink runs his labels with the micro-adjustments necessary in the Techno market. Studio 1, he explains, is for buyers who want to rely on having a steady Mike Ink bass drum — a trademark he repeatedly describes, with a pumping forearm movement, as "boots-boots-boots." Profan Records is more subject to Ink's whims. "I wanted to have a platform for more weird experimental things, strange things, with influences that are normally forbidden in Techno, like harmonies, beats which are too slow, or bass drums which are not loud enough. The DJ, he wants the same record every month, and the journalist wants something different every month. I live somewhere in between."

Ink believes the process of cultural appropriation via sampling is already "too accelerated" for copyright laws to matter, but he's keeping his distance from the more general homogenization of musical styles inherent in the Techno scene. "For me it doesn't make sense to listen to drum 'n' bass now — it's absolutely not my music. I think it's a typically British thing. I think it doesn't make sense. I don't think somebody in London will take a drum 'n' bass artist in Cologne very seriously. The Techno I try to represent is more of a German thing, very deep, like Wagner or Nietzsche." But it's not a Nationalism trip. "Boots-boots-boots" is this German. Since we have computer revolution, boots-boots-boots is very close to Phuture "The Creator", that is definitely black music. Two mouse clicks away, the groove on the computer changes into something which is laid back, or something which is upfront. This is not political any more, this is just a question of structures."

To Düsseldorf, a short hop north on the train, to visit the drop-dead gorgeous Academy of St Martin in the Streets — the Mouse On Mars studio. Next door to a gigantic, high-ceilinged artist's loft, Jan St. Werner and Andi Toma have their musical bolt-hole. It's stacked — naturally — with a mouth-watering array of old and new gear which they use to assemble the pliable, moulded plastic surfaces of their music, which at best is articulated like some new 'Intelligent' polymer.

Werner and Toma — or 'Jandi', as they sign themselves — have refined a sophisticated conception of socio-artistic organisation, where music and the act of creation resonates at every level, from the surface texture to its distribution in the public domain. "We build social units of sound," says Jan. "Families, societies, structures, architectures." Where does the family planning come into the process? "First it's about fucking, and then it's about realising we have to find space in the kindergarten, and get clothes for them, and then OK, maybe you find somebody who gives you financial aid. First it's really like making a mess. When you do it, so many things happen, and you're just a part of it."

I tell them how rare it is to find musicians working in the areas of Techno and Electronica who are willing to offer their music as a social model. "In the end, you are responsible," Andi insists. "After a certain point you have to start to control — not too much control, but to think about what you're doing."

"It's not like an overall global view or concept or something," says Jan. "I think the problems we work out in the music are problems we could transfer to normal life. What happens if something happens differently? How can you make your life interesting? What can you do to combine the routine that has to be there, with some adventures?"

"And it's good to invite people into your surroundings," adds Andi. "To give them the chance to be part of it and discover their own stuff, because a lot of times people discover parts in our music we didn't realise. That means we still don't know totally what's going on."

Their hospitality is the main reason why there was precious little Mouse On Mars

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REACT.

product available last year. First, they got involved in a disastrous film soundtrack which was shelved for being, well, too House On Mars for Hollywood. Then they somehow found themselves recording an album with Kraflwerk's Wolfgang Flür. They still appear shellshocked after that one. "He brought us to collapse," says Jan, wincing at the memory. "I think we all met at a level of what we call Schlager [crass pop hit] in Germany. Not even Easy Listening, more like Easy Thinking."

They needn't be so quick to down the project, which has been released in Germany on the Harvest label as *Time Flies by Yamo* — the slower tracks contain some genuinely ravishing Techno-pop moments. But I can understand their disaffection with Flür's lyrics. As if to wipe out the experience, they've just had Stereolab's Laetitia Sadier in the studio to record the *Coché Coeur* *Narf* EP for early summer release. The four tracks show a blazing return to form, with Sadier's sherbet harmonies almost upstaged by the notched, punctured, chunked digital surfaces of the backing tracks. They talk about their creative use of MIDI overflow, deliberately pushing too much data through their channels, forcing their machines to improvise in order to cope. "It's when you have too much information running through your interfaces," explains Jan. "It's not



exactly synchronised any more. This is rhythm — it's always beside the exact point, a bit behind it or a bit before it that makes a groove. Funk."

"... is a kind of data overflow." And finishes "And we like that." Jan goes on, "It happens in the smallest event: how you cut a sample, how you play the drums, how you play a guitar, how you use an effect. It's in the smallest dose of something."

Jan's lively rants could fill an entire magazine, but the conversation eventually turns towards the consequences of media's evolutionary leap to digitization. "Where's the beginning of these questions?" he asks. "Did mankind invent digital technology because they are in a way ready for it? Even if not everyone can cope with it, maybe it was time to go further and start to develop this information into 44,000 events per second. Or maybe you should say, OK, this is the point where you should start, and you might get a headache, but this is the task you have to deal with. This is about the challenge. It gets very abstract, but the whole evolution is not about relaxing." Evolution, it becomes increasingly clear, preys on catastrophe. "And the closer to the catastrophe you are, the more creative you become, and the more active. I think digital technology is still for a lot of people a strange thing, and it is very good to think about the problems that it brings. But as well, when the train was invented, people thought that if you go faster than 30 miles an hour, you die. But you would die anyway, so."

Cologne was badly bombed during this century's second great catastrophe, and even now the city is undergoing immense reconstruction. Silvered penthouses sit on top of 19th century townhouses like dental caps, the ghost of a VW logo, torn off a commercial building, still haunts its backdrop, the east bank of the Rhine glitters with luxury hotels and corporate headquarters. It's no wonder that such a fervent and unquestioned remix/recombinant culture is rooted here. The third *Microstoria* LP, *Reprovers*, features Colopiers C-Schult & Hapch and FX Randomz as well as

Christophe Charles, Nicolas Collins, Li, Jim O'Rourke and Volant Onsen Gesha. And there are two big festivals scheduled to happen this year that deploy forces more creatively than the tentacles of DJs on rotation at commercial outdoor raves. *Elektrik Thinx*, in May, is organised by electronic improviser Frank Schulte, whose Switchbox group unites disparate free jazz/improv characters such as Anna Homler, David Moss, David Shea, Otomo Yoshihide, Jon Rose and Christian Marclay. He's been responsible for the musical annexation of numerous forgotten sound spaces in the city, from the superbly '70s laminated walls of Café Hallenkerkerleuther to abandoned churches. *Elektrik Thinx* connects a wide variety of approaches, with performances by David Toop, David Moss, Scanner, Bernd Friedmann, Jaki Liebezberg's Club Off Chaos, Markus & Gudrun Gut, Ryoji Ikeda, Markos Schmoecker, and a whole day of drum 'n' bass. Meanwhile, in September, Dr Walker is organising a vast week-long festival called *Battery Park*, whose stellar line-up includes most of the Cologne crop, plus Klaus Schulze, Neu's Michael Rother, Fetsch Park, Patrick Pulsinger, Mego Records, Khan, Joe Zawinul, Jammm' Unit, Atom Heart and about 50 others.

Underground music in Cologne, as in the rest of Germany, is booming. As another distinguished resident, Bernd Friedmann (aka Nonplace Urban Field/Drome), tells me, "Maybe the city's tradition in experimental music, Electronics and jazz still functions as a magnet for those who prefer living in a creative community. It's not the music itself being the same subject, it is one's attitude, character and psychology shaping the creative process. Hopefully, what remains is not the name of the city that they have in common, but their subjectivity."

It's probably this deeper understanding of the social forces governing the musical process that give rise to the scenes' raw health: it doesn't have to be validated or defined by the UK or US markets any more. Carl's Holger Czulay, Liquid Sky's oldest attendee, is thrilled with the recent turn of events. "It's just like Can in the beginning, like 69!" he says. "I didn't dare to dream it would be possible again. These guys are so easy. You can be as weird as possible, and you are still not weird enough for them." And the key to Cologne's peculiar fertility? "The combinations," reels Holger. "This is probably the magic word in the future. We have made a lot of combinations these days, but still not enough. We are still just at the beginning." We are at the beginning, but there is movement. This evening, at Liquid Sky, a concert will take place.

some records

Burgerlink — Las Vegas (Harvest/EMI Electrola)

Gas — Gas (Hillie Plateaux)

Genf — Import/Export (Compost, Roh (Finlayson Tonträger))

Holocaust — Ketsmarock EP (A-Musik)

Kontakta — Kontakta (Old Size)

Löte — Löte (A-Musik)

Lithops (Jan Werner) — Wackler/Kahn 1.2" (Eat Raw)

Love Inc — Love's A Gas (Force Inc)

Microstoria — Reprovers (Hillie Plateaux)

House On Mars — *Coché Coeur* *Narf* EP (Too Pure)

Pluramen — Pick Up Canyon (Hillie Plateaux)

Schlammpeitziger — *Freundlichbaracudameibedeledgut*, *Freundlichbaracudameibedeledgut*

(Freundlichbaracudameibedeledgut, 10" (both A-Musik))

Frank Schulte — Switchbox (Moer's Music)

Various — Liquid Sky Adventure Series 1 & 2 (Electro Bunker Cologne)

Various — Studio 1 (Studio 1)

Various — Profan (Profan)

Wabi Sabi — Wabi Sabi (A-Musik)

Workshop — *Mingwusheng Xiang* (Ladomat 2000)

Yamo — *Time Pie* (EMI Electrola)

some addresses

A-Musik (shop & mail order for all the records mentioned above) Brüsseler Platz 10a, 50674 Cologne Fax: 00 49 221 510 7592 **Delirium Records** Gießbäckerstrasse 36, 50672 Cologne Fax: 00 49 221 528 022 **Elektrik Thinx** Festival 10 00 49 221 952 99 410 Fax: 00 49 221 952 99 490 **Liquid Sky** Kyffhäuserstrasse 43, Cologne Fax: 00 49 221 240 3267



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A man with short brown hair and a neutral expression is looking directly at the camera. He is positioned behind a crinkled, translucent blue plastic sheet that he is holding with his hands on the right side. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a moody atmosphere. The background is dark and indistinct.

lone

Deploying breakbeats with the deftness of a martial artist, Rupert Parkes's tracks as **Photek** of modern urban living. So what's he doing in a quiet corner of Middle England, and planning



sword sman

draw inspiration from the speed and paranoia to relocate to Japan? Interview by Chris Sharp

It's 20 minutes since the train pulled away from the squalour that surrounds King's Cross station, and the compulsive, toxic energy of the inner city. Now this tubular hulk of plastic and steel is scything through the Hertfordshire countryside. Verdant fields roll by, silent and voluptuous. I gaze blankly at this rural tableau through abraded perspex windows, breathe the modulated air, depress the 'play' button on my portable, personal stereo and through Awa headphones listen to "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu", five minutes of synthesized percussive brilliance written and recorded in the heart of the English greenbelt by Rupert 'Photek' Parkes. The drums are cavernous, broken apart by the slamming of dungeon gales and interlaced with the surgical clash of swords. The highly-synopated rhythm track is punctuated by what sound like squalls of feedback and the plaintive call of Oriental flutes. As the train reaches its destination in the almost supernaturally genteel commuter village of Harpenden I feel deflated and slightly perplexed — the gulf between the edgy eloquence of the music and the environment in which it was created seems inexplicable.

Outside the station a woman is nervously checking her hair, peering at her reflection in the door of an 80s phonebox. I am watching her, looking for clues, when a black Ferrari pulls up beside me. The passenger door opens, and the driver leans across the seat to offer me his hand. "All right, mate, I'm Rupert. Yeah, safe."

"There's a void where there should be ecstasy" — Hyper: On Experience, 'Lords Of The Null Lines', 1993

There was a time when Jungle was meant to articulate the dread of the metropolis and the cheap, prated pleasures of adolescent life in satellite towns. Audio fragments lifted from shoot-'em-up games software and body-horror on the VCR thronged the tunes of 1992 and 1993, evoking the late capitalist, force-fed diet of transient thrills, banal violence and ambient drift which described the cultural life of disenfranchised youth, inner city and suburban models. The kids knew the score, and their music revelled in the looting, free-for-all, street-not liberation of it all. It was cheap, hard and fast, defiant, criminal-minded, almost, erogenous exuberant — and as Rupert Parkes and I accelerate noisily through the slumbering housing estates of Harpenden, I feel a muted echo of that thrill. But Parkes is no Blackford Leys ram-racer. The Ferrari which coasts into the gravelled drive of the detached cottage he uses as studio, design workshop, office and home is about to be traded in for the teutonic reliability of a Porsche — just as Jungle, in 1994, traded in its febrile, hyper-tense and explosively anti-social energy for the pacific, string-drenched billowings of 'intelligent drum 'n' bass. And alongside the tracks released by L.T.J. Bukem's Good Looking label, it was the music written by Rupert Parkes which precipitated that particular, peculiar shift.

If you ventured into the steel-clad basement of Soho's Black Market Records during that time, you could see it happening. Ray Keith (then dominating DJ sets as a producer with "Terrorist", a sparse and moody track recorded under the name Renegade) was labouring behind the counter as he had been for many months, piling discs from the wall-mounted display, sweat glistening on his brow as he sliced them up on the decks for the approval of the punters standing five rows deep in the tiny room. But as the weeks passed, the mood in the shop began to change, the mix became more streamlined, the clash of frequencies, from sub-bass to contralto whines, less dislocating. Fewer tracks released by those bastions of hardcore Formation, Suburban Base, and Reinforced were making it onto the decks. Gradually replacing them were cuts from newer labels: Good Looking, Rugged Vinyl, V Recordings and, slipped with increasing regularity from their virgin white sleeves, Certificate 18. Dominating that fledgling label's output at the time was the work of

PHOTO: DAVID BELLIS

two artists, Studio Pressure and Source Direct, better known now by their current aliases, Phonte and Source Direct. When the Moving Shadow label, in the vanguard of the "intelligent" movement thanks to such staggering Omni Trios cuts as "Through The Vibe" and "Soul Promenade", opened its Section 5 shop in the King's Road later that year, the back wall was thick with Certificate 18 releases. Meanwhile, back in central London, a new club had opened called Speed.

"Up to about 1991 there was loads of stuff that really did inspire me," says Rupert Parkes, recalling 1994's dizzy ride on the swingometer of taste, "but then it went so stale for a bit: all that horror movie stuff, I thought it was just stupid. I almost became a complete House and Garage head, but I couldn't quite abandon that element that I loved about hardcore — the beats. The first record I released was "Jump" by Studio Pressure. I met the bloke who set up Certificate 18, and it was like, 'You've got the label, I've got the tunes.' The early artists were Phonte and Source Direct. We were of the same mind. We wanted to put a bit more of the jazz fusion feel into the music. We were purely doing our own thing at the time, expecting everyone to think it was rubbish — and they did, for a long time, except maybe Fabio and Butem, who loved the jazz element, and that was the beginning of all the Speed stuff. Speed was set up specifically to play that sort of stuff: early PFM, me and Sounds Of Life, some of the Rugged Vinyl, I think. And before empty for the first year.

In Rupert Parkes's front room there are many testaments to his firm grounding in the intricacies of 60s and 70s jazz. CDs by John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Roy Ayers and Keith James are stacked alongside the crates of drum 'n' bass while Phonte Parkes speaks warmly of listening to Gilles Peterson's Jazz FM radio show as a teenager, trying to imagine what instruments could be generating those daphnagogic, synthetic textures that shine at the heart of Roy Ayers's music. The abiding influence of those intimate listening experiences can be heard in early Studio Pressure releases such as "Book Of Changes" and "Rufus" and musical shuffles, undulating ride-cymbal tones and elegantly faltering chords are filtered through the levelled, then rarefied, drum 'n' bass producers he subsequently trapped. Parkes refused to be seduced by the technical excesses which seem to be an inevitable consequence of immersion in the fusion formula. Listen to "Pseudo", in which trip, shimmering arpeggiated glitter mournfully at the heart of a heavily phased breakdown, for a demonstration of just how well Parkes had grasped the power of audio-economy.

In 1994 and 1995 Parkes tracks swarmed into the specialist shops. Studio Pressure became Phonte, and over a period of 18 months his 12's appeared. At the same time there were pseudonymous releases like "Feel Me" by Syllium X and the massively influential "Dolphin Tune" recorded for Good Looking under the name Aquarius. Remakes of Carl Craig's "Bug In The Bassbin" and Therapy?'"s "Loose" did the rounds, and as the outside world began to discover drum 'n' bass, the sliver of Phonte-related product meant that he received practically unending attention. Inevitably, producers began to imitate his style, sucked in by the prospect of an emergent jungle-jazz fusion, and in attendant notions of sophistication and musicality notions which were diametrically opposed to the prevailing opinion of hardcore as a mindless, transient soundtrack for the juvenile underclass.

That cheesy stuff with all those horrible jazz House melodies — it's not real jazz at all, it's some sick offspring," he says when I ask him how he feels about the music he's filtered through. "The Source Directs were coming from more of a Miles Davis angle, and we don't want to be associated with what that music has become. But it happens. I like the time, and not just in drum 'n' bass. The main problem in all music is that people take easy ways out. They get shown a certain style of arranging music, and they just carry on, churning out the same old stuff. I feel like I have a sort of duty to myself to take things forward, to progress. Although you can't really control how other people might be thinking, you might be able to embarrass them into doing something themselves."

The run of Phonte releases came to a halt at the end of 1998, coincidentally just as Parkes finished a deal with Virgin to underwrite a new label, Science (currently, his old Certificate 18 label moves Source Direct are the only other name in the Science catalogue). Since then, he has only released two records, "The Hidden Camera" and "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu". But what records.

In the heart of London's financial sector, the streets are deserted, as is usual for a Sunday afternoon. Through the crisscrossing archways of Leadenhall Market, I can see the base of the Lloyds Building, and the beginnings of its esotericist galleries and galleries. In the struts of the Metal Exchange the LED displays are static. The buildings around me describe bold, menacing, intersections. If I look up at any one of them, to a height of maybe 15, 20 feet, my gaze is met by an unblinking lens encased in an alloy cylinder. Somewhere below, these windows, facades I am being flattered in drab black and white, recorded and transmitted on spooling videotape. If I make a sudden movement, I sense the shimmering, distant pulses, and experience curious emotions: a strange modern hybrid encompassing aesthetics, playfulness, solitude and fluttering paranoia. The air is stunk, but an even better soundtrack to this quintessential urban experience would be a tape of Phonte's "The Hidden Camera".

"I like to create atmospheres and moods by making the music as unatmospheric as possible. The absence of feeling kind of becomes the feeling"

"Why do people connect with our music?" Derrick May once asked. "I think it's because the world has made them bitter. They have deep emotional feelings, and no way of expressing them." In the late B.O.s, May and Juan Atkins managed to encompass the decaying silences and thwarted aspirations of Detroit in the monochrome, plangent spaces of Techno, creating a new, mute language for emergent, unrecognizable emotions. Techno was able to effect its viral spread around the globe not just because it made people dance (disco could do that), but because it somehow reflected and expressed their compromised and complex interior lives. When I walk into Rupert Parkes's house, the first thing I hear is "The Dance" by Rhythm Is Rhythim. If the UK breakbeat movement provides Ptoke's music with its process, context and audience, Detroit gives it its soul.

"I like to create atmospheres and moods by mixing the music as unatmospheric as possible," he explains. "The absence of feeling kind of becomes the feeling. I was always struck by the way that Model 500 and Mayday records gave you really strong feelings, but feelings that were impossible to describe, to put into words — you don't quite know what you're feeling. You'd almost have to describe someone's whole life, how they got where they are, imagine some sort of situation which would take hours to explain."

In a rare stroke of formal unity, the emotional depth of Ptoke's music is a direct consequence of its technical complexity. As anyone who has heard a Joe Satriani guitar solo will readily testify, virtuosity can be a powerful enemy of expression. But it's precisely because Parkes spends upwards of a month on each track, replaying the loops endlessly, that simplistic effects are filtered out of the music.

Over the last four years he has refined his approach to composition relentlessly, going deeper and deeper into the breaks, exploring time in millisecond gradations, attending to the requirements of each individual sound, eschewing, almost monolithically, any easy route through the music-making process.

"I construct every break that I use myself, sampling each individual percussion sound, experimenting with different attack velocities," he explains. "I'm always trying to develop sounds rather than getting them from other sources. I get guitars in and make my own sounds from scratch, then process them from there. It's a whole different technique. Maybe a couple of years ago I'd cram stuff in and hurry on to the next part of the tune, but now I give myself time to listen to the sounds over and over again, thinking about what kind of sounds I'm using and how I'm placing them. When you do that, the more obvious, instantly appealing sounds get boring, because you listen to them hundreds of times going round in the loop over a period of weeks, and the more obvious a sound is, the more quickly it wears off. You start to do stuff that doesn't sound quite right to start with, and just let it work itself into the track."

I have a theory about musicians in the age bracket 25 to 30. It's about home computers — Z801s and ZX Spectrums — and the way that their primitive programs used to be recorded on cassettes. It was a wayward method of storage. In order to load a program in, these nascent producers would routinely spend hours listening to the alien screech of raw data as it fought its way into those tiny processors. As they waited for the process to complete, they would detect strange, irresistible patterns in the cycles of white noise. Perhaps this is a partial explanation for the emergence of noise as an essential ingredient in so much electronic-based music. I mention this idea to Parkes and he laughs. "There's a bit of that noise in a tune that I've just finished — I twisted it into a weird kind of string sound."



In March a curious thing happened. You might have missed it, but for one week only "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu" was a Top 40 hit. When I mention this to Parkes he laughs again. "Even the title is practically unpronounceable for most people, and the only vocals in it are Japanese. It doesn't really fulfil the usual criteria for chart success."

Ni Ten Ichi Ryu is a Japanese martial arts technique which uses a long sword and a short sword simultaneously. The track uses two drumbreaks to represent the movement and interaction of the swordsmen and their swords. Prompted perhaps by The Wu Tang Clan, there's a whole sub-genre of Jungle which draws inspiration from the culture surrounding martial arts. DJ Hype's "You Must Think First", Dope Sick's "6,000,000 Ways", Tee Bone & Stretch's "Shokin' Style", for instance, are densely populated by samples lifted from Bruce Lee movies and the bone-crunching rhythms of kick-boxing. Parkes's interest in the Orient is different, however. The Pacific Rim allusions in "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu", "The Water Margin" and "Seven Samurai" speak more of the elaborate subtlety of Japanese tea ceremonies, the minutised intimacy of

Bonsai, the elegant simplicity of Shodo (the art of ink writing with sparse brushstrokes).

"Yeah," Parkes agrees, "and there's a direct link to what I do musically. The Oriental stuff is something that I've always been into, ever since *The Water Margin* was on TV. I used to do karate when I was younger, and I like to imagine that martial artists who don't even listen to any sort of music might start to think that Jungle's all right if they heard 'Ni Ten'. I love the harmony, the mental discipline — it's simple but effective."

That sense of discipline shines through the music that Parkes is currently compiling for inclusion on his first album, due out in the autumn. On first hearing the

tracks sound remarkable, exuding the hyper-detailed, constantly-vibrating mental intensity which went into their creation. As he says, "You make thousands of decisions over the course of a track — it's a never-ending process of selecting, discarding, listening, approving, and then going back and deciding again."

"It sounds like it's degrading the album to describe it as a sketchbook, like it's made of all the bits that didn't make it, but the process of making a record like this, the whole way that it develops, is all so interlinked with itself. I think of it as being like the sketchbook of an artist, each piece of music at a different stage of realisation, and some people will maybe get more out of the fragments than they might out of the more finished products."

As he drives me back to Harpenden station, Rupert Parkes tells me about his plans to move to Japan. "I just felt so at home there," he says. On the station platform I plug the headphones in, and listen to "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu". One more time. Rail tracks snake into the distance, their mute trajectory echoed by overhead electricity cables and phone lines. TV monitors flash messages of arrival and departure. The air is clean. The train arrives dead on time. But I take a seat near a dangerous-looking youth who is drinking from a can of Diamond White or. And as the tape spools from a passage of intoxicating calm to a dislocating percussion break, I am struck by how neatly Rupert Parkes's music expresses the compromised status of suburban living.

"As far as I'm aware, there's no one going as far as I am, as in-depth," he had told me earlier. "You can't get those results unless you go through hell to get there. I take it seriously, what I do, and to go to those lengths you've either got to be mad, or you've got to really care — because it takes so long." □ Scene releases are distributed through Warp/EMI.

I meet Robert Fripp in the recording studio section of the headquarters of his record label, Discipline Global Mobile, which is located in rolling countryside outside Salisbury. Beyond the silent racks of digital recording and editing equipment, an ancient and enormous mellotron sits anomalously in a far corner. He mentions that it is just one of five such instruments which he owns. Fripp's conversational traits are as individual as his guitar playing. Questions often meet with lengthy pauses, but he's not lost for words. Rather than scrabbling around for ideas on the thrashing floor of idle chit-chat, he remains superficially calm, impenetrable, but no doubt a brain scan would show electrical impulses shooting hither and thither at high speed. Then comes the measured response, couched in an idiosyncratic personal vernacular which can sound almost comically archaic, punctuated with rhetorical questions and his curious habit of referring to himself in the third person, all delivered in his still-evident Dorset burr. These conversational traits give him the dual air of a detached, cosmopolitan theorist, and a precise, courteous, somewhat pedantic pedagogue plucked from the background action of one of Thomas Hardy's Wessex Tales.

Fripp is best known, of course, for his continuing work with King Crimson. The group was revived again in 1994 after lying dormant for a decade, the reason being, according to Fripp, that "when music appears that only King Crimson can play, then sooner or later King Crimson appears to play the music." So far this umpteenth incarnation of the group has released, on DGM, a live bootleg, *B/Boom*, a collage of live improvisations, *Throakalot*, and the studio album *Throak*, their best work for 20 years.

Nearly 30 years after redefining the guitar in King Crimson, **Robert Fripp** remains an independent

At the time of its formation in early 1969, King Crimson played a unique musical hybrid that inadvertently kick-started Progressive rock. From that point it has steered clear of the worst excesses associated with so many groups of that era and genre. It's tempting to restate the argument that the group stood apart from its contemporaries, and should be judged in the same rarefied isolation afforded the likes of Jimi Hendrix and John Coltrane, an apologet in other words. But suffice it to say that King Crimson has always been singular in its pursuit of an individual form of group expression which reconciled spontaneity with collective virtuosity and compositions of sometimes daunting complexity.

In a long and varied musical career Fripp has never looked back, but grant him some small indulgence with the recent release of *Epitaph*, a four CD box set containing live recordings of the original Crimson line-up. The music has been salvaged from lo-fi source tapes by Fripp's long-time producer/engineer (and DGM label manager) David Singleton. At a playback in a London hotel in March, 500 aficionados shared a space with all the original group members: Fripp, reeds player Ian McDonald, bass player and vocalist Greg Lake, drummer Michael Giles, and lyricist and light show operator Peter Sinfield. Autographs were signed and the group had an emotionally charged meeting after the fans had dispersed. It was the first time they had been together under one roof in 28 years.

It's a week later when I ask Fripp how he felt about the event.

"Coming home, I thought: how can I describe to my wife [Toyah Wilcox] how I felt about today," he replies, "and the answer which flew back — when I ask Robert questions the answer sometimes flies back — was this: the last time I felt like this was on the day we married. It's not that I was emotionally numb but the day was emotionally numbing. The event was so significant and larger than me as an individual that in proportion to the event I was a tiny little thing and hence overwhelmed — although my presence was still necessary."

The event looked a long way back in time, but the music it celebrated retained a vitality and edge that carried it out of the realms of nostalgia.

"Oh no, it wasn't nostalgia," says Fripp. "I don't feel that the music is in my past. It feels to me it's still part of my present. With the Crimson in 1969, the music descended music leant over and took us into its confidence, and the power of that is

mobile

intelligent and

spirit dedicated to self-reliance, invention and the pursuit of musical highs. Story by Mike Barnes



so remarkable. If you get touched by that you go hunting for an elevator to the roof. If I heard a tape of that drummer [ie Giles] and it was sent to me today from a drum in Seattle, I'd say, 'Get me his number please! How could you date that drummer?'

It's interesting that very little of the music created. Some of it belonged to its period and I would say the magic was in the moment, but for me the moment isn't governed by a particular date. It's a larger moment. More test?" he adds, with barely a pause for punctuation.

There are rumours that the original group might play together again. Frapp gives it his blessing. "The music is there to be played," he says. But although he performs his part of the original 1969 material in the current incarnation of Crimson, he doesn't personally want to get involved in a reunion. He even suggested another guitarist who could fill in for him, which seems to have effectively nixed the idea.

Frapp has been the one constant factor through King Crimson's long life (the group's name was taken from Sinfield's lyric to the song "In The Court Of The Crimson King", the title track of their debut album). In the turbulent few years following their nuptials — which saw a different line-up on every album — he was regarded as either a benevolent despot or a tyrant, depending on which ex-group member's story you believed. So far he has worked with over 30 musicians under the Crimson banner. Perhaps modestly, perhaps slightly disingenuously, he's keen to play down the role of the group's leader. Instead, in his sleeve notes to *Epitaph*, he identifies himself as its "raison d'être".

Crimson's music has always pivoted around the harsh, angular forms generated by Frapp's guitar playing and his expansive compositions. And when Sinfield was involved, there was lyricism of the most rococo ornamentation. A prominent jazz influence featured in the early days, too, with Frapp persuading players like Marc Chang on cornet and double bass player (the late) Harry Miller to come and blow. Mavens percussionist Jamie Muir (a 'star' of the UK's free improvisation underground who had worked with Derek Bailey among others) put his drums, bike frame, squeaky toys, glass tubing and Tupperware boxes to spectacular effect on the 1973 album *Lark's Tongues In Aspic*. And when, in a supremely unlikely moment, the group got to perform their "Cat Food" single on *Top Of The Pops* in 1970, Keith Tippett was present, miming his splintered piano lines on set, surrounded by grooving teens.

I ask Frapp if there is a signature that runs through the group's music in its manifold incarnations.

"For me it's Energy, Intensity, Eclecticism," he replies. Expanding on the eclecticism aspect, he continues, "Look how broad the experience of the players within any King Crimson happens to be." He runs through the first line up, explaining that Ian McDonald had come from playing in army bands, Giles from jazz and pop (and the pre-Crimson trio, Giles & Frapp), Lake from a pop and R&B background while Frapp's own apprenticeship included three years as a member of a hotel house band

in Bournemouth playing at Jewish weddings and bar mitzvahs.

"My particular responsibility was providing the bands with what they called the tests," he says. "Being a young musician I was supposed to have my finger on the current of pop. Plus three of the men in the band were superb jazz musicians. Wide experience," he concludes, "particularly wide for young men."

"Then look at the current team. In 1981 I couldn't find any jukebox anywhere in the world that Tony Levin [Crimson's bass and Chapman stick player] wasn't on somewhere. He's even worked in the Buddy Rich band, but I think that was his first professional gig. He got a call from [John] McLaughlin when he was putting The

Mahavishnu Orchestra together, and it was hilarious how he missed the call. I can't remember the exact details but I think the message came through his mother-in-law and she said, 'Murray Vishnu called and wanted you to join his orchestra,' he says wheezing with laughter.



In the 1970s, when so many groups were given to over-reaching both themselves and their audience, Crimson's music provided feelings that ran the gamut from near-religious devotion to suspicion and derision. Their ambitious music was often dismissed as dry and intellectual, but that was a facile judgement for a group that was sometimes apocalyptic in its intensity. Frapp was dabbling in wicca, Western Kabbalah and other branches of the occult, and simultaneously garnering a reputation as an unconventional ladies' man. He was, according to Ian McDonald writing in NME in 1973, "sex-crazed." Frapp developed a concept that Crimson's music, indeed

all good rock music, needed a basis in virtuosic technique to realise the emotional and creative impulses, but there was also the primal driving force, the very rock 'n' roll element of testosterone to add to the equation. He named these prerequisites "The Head, The Heart and The Hips".

The 1971 LP *Islands*, though a patchy record, sees this concept in action. The Heart is best represented by the hybrid jazz exorcism and sun-bleached melodies of "Formentera Lady", the Head by "The Salar's Tale", on which Frapp whittles alien forms out of the music in an astonishing guitar showcase. The Hips come courtesy of "Ladies Of The Road", a sleazy, bluesy excursion featuring Sinfield's outrageously lurid poem to groupies, full of lines like "Stone-headed Frisco spooie! Ate all the meat I gave her." I ask Frapp if the three Hs can still

“When the boos became as loud as the PA, Eno and I looked at each other, pulled the system and left the audience.”

be used to define the group's music.

"That was one version of it," he says by way of qualification. "Certainly you have the cerebral functioning, the effective life, and you have the body and how you engage that in the performance of music, or living generally. If you look at jazz and rock 'n' roll, the etymology of it, both refer to the act of helpless running. Going back to Jelly Roll Morton, the flag is raised for helpless running. So within rock music generally, I think there's a strong sexual element. However, when you're a happily married man within a band of happily married men whose sexual functions all take part within their unions, you have to say, 'Is this an expression of the men's sexuality?' Well, probably

as much as an expression of anything else within their lives.

"If you look at young people, their attention is probably disproportionately connected with the procreative act, whether that is the general intention or not. Anything sexual and creative come very close together. If you said to me, 'Can you give me an example of creative thought?', I could give you Beethoven's String Quartets. What would be an example of creative expression from the body? Well, having children. What might creative feeling be? Well, you're on your way to love, but you may or may not be quite at that point. So in terms of what is the role of sex within King Crimson now, I'd have to ask the other guys, I think! You'd probably appreciate for Robert, happily married at 50, 'The Head, The Heart and The Hands' would be a clearer expression for a musician. But you need all of them."

The 1969 Eptaph recordings contain a surprisingly high number of collective free improvisations, and the current *Crimson*'s most recent album, *Theknotok*, splices together an hour's worth of group improvisations from live shows. This freedom was and is juxtaposed with at times severe formal writing.

"My own writing was more addressed, increasingly, to giving the musicians a springboard to jump from — or from which to jump," says Fripp, smiling as he corrects himself. When I ask him about the importance of spontaneity in the music he pauses for a long time before answering.

"Anything created can't be predicted — at least the form any creative impulse will give rise to you can't predict. Anything you can anticipate will be in terms of what you already know, which is not, by definition, creative. Something which is creative is new, utterly novel."

"One of the difficulties I have working with professionals is that they know what they're doing. Because they know what they're doing you don't get them — this is generally — playing what they don't know how to do. This links us a little with *Crimson*, where generally the tradition, the technical professional standards, are fairly high. So how to bypass that? Well, extemporisation, improvisation is part of that."

"Improvisation is when it happens, extemporisation is what you do to get there. Something like poetry and verse: poetry is poetry; verse is what you do to try and get to poetry. So most improvisation is in my view extemporisation, and there are approaches of learning how to extemporise so one might reach a point where improvisation is taking place. But in our tradition, we've generally forgotten it, with one exception, widely available in present English culture, at least a certain part of it."

Fripp falls silent and then gestures as if to prompt an answer. "The Organ Voluntary. This is when the plate is going around in the church. Let's say that time stands still while money is being collected for the church's necessary undertakings. You don't know how quickly the plate will pass, so it falls on the organist to improvise. If you look at Messiaen, for example, in a sense Messiaen was embodying that particular tradition, albeit from a French Catholic viewpoint. But

apart from that you'd be really hard pushed to find a living example of long standing improvisation within the culture."

"At a Frippertronics performance, I believe in Boston in 1983, some questions and answers were taken," he continues. "The question was: what is improvisation? The answer I gave at that time was the introduction of nullability into form so that the sport may more freely enter. Probably that's better used as a description of extemporisation rather than improvisation. The aim is that the flow of music can proceed. You can also say that improvisation is more left brain than right brain, but that — and this is my view — you have to have the right brain. Ideally you have both hemispheres working in King

Crimson. You have the formal and the seemingly informal and hopefully an increasing rapprochement between the two."

Fripp's solo music initially developed as an adjunct to his group activities. Frippertronics emerged from a process that was pioneered by Brian Eno and employed on Fripp and Eno's 1973 collaboration *No Pussyfooting*. The system, which had at least one precedent in the 60s experiments of Terry Riley, involved two Revox tape recorders running in parallel, producing via tape delays, a soundfield in constant flux. The music would slowly build and dissolve as more notes were added, and Fripp could cut out of the loops and solo over the top as the mood took him. Over the years his solo guitar pieces have developed via the use of digital delays and MIDI treatments into what are now called Soundscapes.

Fripp has talked about "the notion of hazard" as an imperative when creating solo music via such systems, and more broadly, when there are musical undertakings involving risk.

"Hazard is chance with significance," he explains. "Chance may be arbitrary, hazard is never arbitrary, there is always significance. If you turn up at Green Park station at Bath [the venue for a recent Soundscapes performance] and plug in and there is a public, it's more than just a chance event, there is significance in this: they might get me, they might shout at me, they might be unkind and unpleasant to me, they might even say: 'Go home!'"

As it turned out, the Bath audience was unprepared for the way a Soundscape performance unfolds gradually over extended timelines.

"We unplugged after three hours of an eight hour performance. They said 'No! to what was being played'."

So far Fripp has released four solo Soundscapes albums. During a performance in Buenos Aires in 1994 (documented on the 1999 album) he left the stage while the machinery played on alone. Some of the audience complained to the promoters. They felt snubbed by what appeared to be a display of arrogant nonchalance on Fripp's part. Ironically, many were prepared to accept tickets for the next show by way of compensation.

The incident helped to develop the performance aspect of Soundscapes. "The way



"I would be inclined to put *Scary Monsters* in my pantheon of all time great rock guitar playing, and I can say that because I'm quite impartial towards my own playing."

you don't do it," Fripp explains, "is in the European concert tradition developed since about 1820 where there is the musician on stage, and there is the audience sitting down earnestly listening."

For Robert, his solo performance at the New You See It Festival on London's South Bank in March of last year was another significant Soundscapes event.

"We played in the foyer [of the Queen Elizabeth Hall] while people went through to other events, got a beer or a sandwich or a cappuccino, listened or didn't — some went to sleep. In other words, the way in which the audience developed a relationship with the music was open for them to discover and create for themselves. The music was there whether you listened to it or not, the music was available whether you listened to it or not. The music made no demand for itself unless you wished to accept the demand it made of you. It just had of scars the atmosphere. It was so wonderfully open."

Having never seen Fripp reveal the roots of his unique guitar style I ask him about his formative influences. "I proffer no analysis," is the answer. Perhaps his style was already there waiting for him to come along and play it? "The quick answer to that is probably, yes," he says.

Fripp left King Crimson, effectively disbanding the group, in 1974. At this point, the line-up of Fripp, drummer Bill Bruford, John Wetton on bass and vocals, and David Cross on violin, viola and mellotron, were creating unparalleled music, a stunning rock/improv hybrid that can be heard at its most intense and extreme on the live recordings collected on the box set *The Great Deceiver*. This is now King Crimson's most feted period, though Fripp adds, "It would have been more interesting if what the band was doing in 1973 and '74 had been embraced in 1973 and '74 rather than 23 years later."

On leaving the group Fripp was full of quorons about there being "a change in the world" and about himself becoming "a small mobile intelligent unit."

"I believe the sense of what I was saying at the time was that, more or less, Crimson has always been a wonderful liberal education for a young man, and now I've found a better or more suitable form of education," he recalls. "Another way of approaching that would be that what I hoped to achieve within a rock group appeared increasingly distant and remote."

So Fripp went his mobile intelligent way, taking a year to wind up his affairs, following the break up of Crimson, and recording the second Fripp and Eno album, *Evening Star*, in 1975. In the autumn of that year he began a nine month sabbatical at the International Academy for Continuous Education at Sherborne House in Gloucestershire, an institution founded in 1971 by JG Bennett, a disciple of the Armenian mystic Gurdjieff. "I realised I needed a teacher rather than just reading various viewpoints on things," he explains. Fripp moved to the US in 1977, lived there permanently for two years, and continued to commute back and forth until 1985. During this period he worked with a diverse group of high-profile artists, including David Bowie, Talking Heads, Blondie, Peter Gabriel, and Daryl Hall on the *Sacred Songs* album (its release was held up for three years by the record company on the

grounds that it wasn't commercial enough). He issued a maverick solo album, *Exposure*, in 1979, followed by *God Save The Queen/Under Heavy Manners*, which included a long mutant disco piece, and the Frippertronics album *Let The Power Fall*. Was this nomadic lifestyle — both musical and geographical — another part of the education process?

"Oh, certainly. The beauty for me is it's always terrifying to turn up to a session with people I may or may not know at all and they make a demand of me. Am I able to respond or not? In 1977-'78 I was playing with bands in New York, bands I'd never played with before on material I'd never heard before. And that's fine here's Robert, he plays guitar, he'll do his best. Here's the tune, here we go and if you can't pick up the key, use your ears, and if you can't handle that get into the spirit of it anyway. So I have a long pedigree of jumping in the deep end with young spirit-oriented bands whose concerns are rather more with the process than the product."

The second phase of King Crimson began in 1981, growing out of the newly-formed group Discipline which featured Adrian Belew on guitar and vocals, Tony Levin and Bill Bruford again. Fripp wrote at the time, "I recognised this potential hovering behind the band, an available energy if we chose to plug in." But he still found time to work with The Damned, of all people.

"We tried to make a single. At the moment the name escapes me [it was "Fan Factory", released in 1990]. Our working relationship began when I was invited to play with The Damned at Hammersmith Odeon — I think this was in 1982. We met on a television show in Germany. The rest of the Crims went on their way. I stayed behind and saw the show, which I loved, and took the boys a bottle of champagne after. Then I got an invitation to play at Hammersmith Odeon. We turned up for the encore and played a couple of songs and got flying. I deliberately set up about 15 feet from the front of the stage and I was amazed that even at 15 feet Bob was flying past my pedal board. [Captain] Sensible was covered and gobbling back. We came off, people were still cheering, and Sensible said, 'Do you want to come back on and do some encores?' I said, 'Fine. What tunes?' — I don't think I'd ever heard them. And Sensible, wonderful instructors for the performer here, said, 'First one's in E and the second one's in E'. Then we were on and that was it."

Fripp's collaborations have produced some spectacular music. I mention that his guitar playing on David Bowie's *Scary Monsters* album is some of his best. His answer, delivered poker-faced, is disarmingly frank.

"I would be inclined to put *Scary Monsters* in my pantheon of all time great rock guitar playing, and I can say that because I'm quite impartial towards my own playing. I have no conceit, neither do I have false modesty. I can put that on and listen to it and it has a conviction, authority and a playfulness which amazes me — none of these I find within myself and yet there it is going on. I'd have to take my hat off to the music rather than the musician."

"Bowie and Eno have always had the good sense to let me get up and fly," he continues. "One of the reasons that Eno does not read the Internet newsletters or



King Crimson, 1997

whatever that discuss him is that he finds people want him to repeat what he's already done. Bowie and Eno want me to repeat what I haven't yet played, that's the future creating what you're doing in the present."

Fripp last worked with Eno on the latter's 1992 *Nerve Net* album. Influential now, the kind of ultra-minimal music which the duo debuted on *No Pussyfooting* was often met with hostility and incomprehension at the time. They even played at the London Palladium in May 1975, a spectacularly unlikely venue for music constructed primarily from analogue tape loops.

"Yes, wonderful," Fripp says, relishing the memory. "It was actually on a Sunday night, Sunday Night at the London Palladium. What is not generally known is that on our debut French performance we were booed off. I think partly it was because the PA system was malfunctioning, and that wasn't entirely fair on the audience and performers, and partly because here was Fripp, the Crimson Kingpin, and here was Eno from *Revy Music*, and what are all these bleeping, droning sounds? When the boos became as loud as the PA, Brian and I looked at each other and there was a kind of simultaneous nod and we pulled the system and left the audience."

In the early '70s, studios' explorations into drone-works and tape-delay systems seemed a long way from the often visceral music being produced by King Crimson.

"But it wasn't like that for me," says Fripp. "I was playing guitar and this was a different context and one which I hadn't been able to find for myself, which was comparable to a string quartet, and here it was emerging in real-time, real-time composition being not a bad, although clumsy, synonym for extemporisation or improvisation."

"Interestingly, EG music and Island Records were very challenged by *No Pussyfooting* and held its release up. They felt Eno's involvement with me would prejudice his commercial life, which was strange to think of Fripp the leftfield character preventing Eno from the middle path."

He isn't keen to classify these experiments as proto-Ambient music. How would he describe them then? "I'm not sure I have to," he replies with a chuckle.

He has made more recent forays into this area that remains undefined — at least by himself — playing on The Future Sound Of London's 1994 *Ektomorph* album. More significantly, he met The Orb's Alex Paterson (who was working in the A&R department at EG Records, Fripp's former label and management company), and later collaborated with Paterson, Kris "Thrash" Weston and Thomas Fohmann on the exceptional 1994 *FWO* album. "We discovered the possibility at one point of working together and then it was a question of time and place," he explains. "I would say what I learnt most from working with The Orb was the irreverence. Not the lack of respect for music — that's quite different — but the irreverence. I hope to work with Alex again. I've not played live with The Orb, although I've had an invitation to. Difficulties have been mainly practical, that I've been elsewhere at the time, and the boys seem to come to life at about two in the morning at which point you'd need to utter rites of recommitment over me to get me to spark. The working routines and schedules are very different — they tend to be most awake when I'm most asleep."

In the decade leading up to the reformation of King Crimson Fripp formed two new groups, The Robert Fripp String Quartet and The League Of Crafty Guitarists (the latter inspired, perhaps, by the earlier League Of Gentlemen, which, in the mid-60s was the name of Fripp's first semi-pro group, he used the name again to title another of his short-lived early 80s groups, one which specialised in a curious brand of instrumental post-punk funk rock). He collaborated, with varying degrees of success, with The Gnd, David Sylvian and David Cunningham, among others. There was also a protracted and bitter bout of litigation with the current directors of EG (some of which is detailed in the *Ektomorph* sleeve notes) which had a profound influence on the formation of DGM. The label encapsulates Fripp's desire to introduce ethical business

practices into an industry that he views as largely corrupt: "To operate in the marketplace while being free of the values of the marketplace," as he puts it.

Although the King Crimson name has reappeared, there's no looking back, no fossilisation involved. Fripp is still searching for those moments that make music making vital, when "the muse has descended and gives you a glimpse of what life is like on the roof". In pursuit of these moments of extreme luck he is manoeuvring the group into areas where this might happen, although he also adds, "While you hunt it, it eludes your grasp."

He concludes by explaining how the act of music is structured, compromised even, by economic imperatives.

"You cannot put a group with the name King Crimson on stage with 2000 people who've paid far too much money for tickets and jump off the deep end without expecting nos. This is from a person who dealt with nos in Italy in 1973 in stadia. This is the time when *Flowers* walked through glass walls because music is for free and for the people. And it's true: music is a gift, it is free and for the people. There's also another view of that which is to put all the members of King Crimson in a room with their equipment takes

\$30,000. If you want to move them from room to room and play to people it costs around \$100,000 a week. The men in King Crimson don't get rich, and to perform in its informal and exploratory context will cost the band money — which is the band investing in themselves to examine, test, develop and have fun in the profession of making music."

Robert Fripp gives solo Soundscapes performances at The Union Chapel, Islington, London on 31 May and at Salisbury Cathedral as part of the Salisbury Music Festival, 2-5 June. Ektomorph is out now on DGM, PO Box 1533, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 5EP.

King Crimson, 1969



thrill jockey



Since leaving the Detroit Techno collective Underground Resistance, **Jeff Mills** has diverted the conventions of electronic music down idiosyncratic channels. Report by Mike Shallcross

It isn't the cleanest or most musically sophisticated sound in Techno, but the music released by Jeff Mills over the last decade has provided the genre with some uniquely dramatic moments. Signature techniques such as the slamming of hi-fi drums and the transformation via modulations and frequency changes of factory-programmed strings into ramshackle orchestras manned by nomadic shamans from Jupiter's outer moons, have created a Techno variant in which generic tropes are distorted to flow through idiosyncratic underground channels. It is a sound which the Chicago-based producer believes is enhanced rather than constrained by a rudimentary knowledge of conventional music process. "I can't actually play the piano or anything, and I would never take a lesson because it might alter what I do," he says. "I think I know what sounds right. I don't know if it's musically correct or in tune, all I know is that it feels right. It is right."

So does he describe himself as a musician? "It's difficult. I would cut today if I could find something else where I could get my message across more and I could make a living out of it. Right now music is the best way to describe what I'm trying to say."

The release of *The Other Day*, a compilation of some of the most resonant tracks issued by Mills's Axis label, has brought the usually media-shy producer into the open. A slight, neatly dressed figure, Mills is an odd interview subject; he discusses his work earnestly but is not precious about it. He is generous with his thoughts on his music, but skilful at avoiding any questions which might reveal a biographical detail not directly related to a particular project. When I ask him how he came to live in Berlin for a brief but significant period in the early 90s, he laughs at a mischievous comparison to earlier Euro-exiles Nick Cave and Lou Reed, and begins a lengthy anecdote about his relationship with the Berlin-based Tresor label which buys the original question.

Key among the "theories and subjects of substance", as Mills refers to them, which Axis has appropriated to forward the symbols and conventions of Techno, is "Cycle Theory". The astral dust which loops through his "19" track is meant to project images of NASA astronauts orbiting earth at tremendous speed. Likewise, Mills believes that our progress through life essentially takes us back to places we have been before, citing, among many examples, the recent spate of mass, cult-related suicides in the US.

"It becomes more and more apparent to me that we do run in cycles," he says. "At the end of the last century the suicide rate climbed because of similar beliefs to what just happened in the US. In terms of technology the period is also quite parallel: the industrial age was starting to mature in a way that the computer age is now."

He is more recent about picking out a musically parallel period to Techno — he seems unwilling to admit to personal musical influences — but settles for the stripped down soul music of the 1960s. "That was a turbulent time," he says. "Soul was extremely meaningful."

Jeff Mills first came to prominence in the late 1980s when, along with "Mad" Mike Banks, he formed the militant Detroit Techno collective Underground Resistance (UR). Combining a group/production team with a record label, UR came on like a cross between Kraftwerk and Public Enemy, inspired by the impenetrable group identity and cyberpunk mystique of the German group, but replacing their playful satires of the computer dance with a fierce line in revolutionary rhetoric and performing live in a uniform of ski-masks and black combat fatigues.

Underground Resistance have inspired much Techno mythology, mainly due to their reluctance to deal with the media and their refusal to be assimilated into the mainstream music industry. In the absence of hard information there are a series of fearsome legends. When one particular European distributor withheld some money due to the group, Banks is said to have hopped on the first plane out of Detroit specifically to give the guy a beating.

Indeed, finding people that they could work with in Europe was initially a struggle. As Mills explains, "In UR we had very little information about where our records were going or what was happening in Europe. I'd never seen what a rave was. We made contact with a couple of people in the UK and instantly without knowing us they started telling us what to do. The reason we started the label in the first place is that we didn't want to be told what to do!" he laughs. "So we said, forget London, let's go to Berlin."

UR performed at the notorious Tresor club, situated in an old underground bank vault in the former East Berlin, and when in 1991 the club launched its own label, UR's "Sonic Destroyer" was its first release. Tresor subsequently licensed many Axis releases, and Mills was inevitably drawn to a city whose ferociously committed Techno community and legacy of experimental electronic music provided him with a more natural base than the UK rave scene.

He offers few clues to UR's methodologies and internal workings. "With UR we wanted to say that people did not have to go through the normal channels to get their music released," he says. "You don't have to give a major label your music and wait for them to call you, you can actually do it yourself."

Mills left the group in 1991, moved briefly to New York, and then to Chicago where, that spell in Berlin aside, he has lived ever since. Despite this he is still perceived as an integral part of the Detroit Techno scene, possibly more for his influence on the city's younger producers such as Claude Young, than any link to the holy trinity of Juan



Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson. "I don't really relate to any of the other Detroit producers," he says. "I never thought that I did, perhaps in the way I program drums, but only slightly."

"I was born in Detroit, I grew up and went to school there and my family still lives there, I'll always love Detroit for what it is," he continues and then pauses. "But I couldn't live there now, not knowing what I know about the world. It's a question of resources; the people are great, much nicer than in Chicago but..."

Although Mills made a few tracks with fellow ex-UR member Robert Hood after leaving Detroit, he has since become uninterested in collaborating with other producers. "I believe there is power in numbers," is his reasoning. "The more good music being made by individual people the better."

Mills is perhaps the most holistic example of what the German Techno producer Westbam has referred to as "record art". He argues that the idea of producing pure machine music in the manner of Kraftwerk is outdated and that the progressive end of electronic music resides in the HiTop technique of using pre-existing vinyl artefacts as instruments of composition in their own right. A good example is "Changes Of Life" from 1992's *Waveform Transmission Volume 1*. The track is constructed around an Italian House-style piano break which has been lifted, scratched and all, from one of Mills's DJing tools rather than an original source, and then mixed to bring out the percussive rather than melodic qualities.

Mills extends the concept to both packaging and format. His first release after leaving UR was H&M's "Tranquilliser" EP, a strange TechnoHouse hybrid produced in conjunction with Robert Hood. The record was pressed so that it played from the inside out. "If you don't do a picture cover or a sleeve that folds out you have very

little to put your message across, so changing the direction on the needle tracking can be used to convey that message," he explains. "Tranquiliser" said we're not going the usual way that you think most records are."

Stopping sideways from the political terrain mapped by UR, Mills started Axis to express more personal and esoteric sentiments. The label's cross-shaped logo represents an imaginary circle, the Axis itself, surrounded by four triangles. "The plan was to establish four other labels which would revolve around the axis," explains Mills, but the engrossing nature of his Axis work has meant that the remaining labels were never established, although Mills has another label, Purpose Music, for which he produces more utilitarian DJ tools, "none to five tracks", as he describes them.

Mills' blueprint for Axis was Underground Resistance's 1991 *Rings Of Saturn* LP which had recorded under the name X-102. Even today, when Techno has acquired some intellectual gravitas, the notion of a concept LP inspired by colossal circles of cosmic dust seems odd. In 1991 it was completely off the wall.

"When I was with UR the project I liked the most was X-102," he says. "That's when I learned how to format an idea and relate it to actual matter. I felt that this should become the basis of this new label Axis which would bring concepts and subjects to my music. For X-102 there were purposely locked grooves at the end of the tracks so that you had to pick the needle up to put it on the next ring. I had to go to the library and find the very detailed information and work out how to relate it to the vinyl."

Mills developed this theme with the X-103 project, released in 1993, which was inspired by the legend of the lost city of Atlantis. It contains some of his best work, the

us" Away from the pristine technological landscapes imagined by Juan Atkins, Mills' music seems to describe the process of moving towards the future rather than the future itself. "My ideas of the future are that it's not so different from now in terms of surroundings. I don't expect there to be robots everywhere."

He cites "Utopia" as an example, where low-end harmonics and quivering high-pitched strings reproduce the atmosphere of a 1950s sci-fi movie theme. "That track best describes my idea of the future. The sounds aren't so futuristic but it's how the sounds are used. I suppose it's the same for all the Axis stuff. The sounds I use aren't so interesting, even for me. It's the notes that are hit and the feel of the overall track that is interesting."

In the streets and arcades of Tokyo's Shibuya district, possible futures melt hallucinogenically into the utopian present. Mills appears fascinated by the country and its culture, paying tribute to the Japanese people's "zeal for advancement."

"It exceeded all of my ideas," he says of his first visit there. "So much of it is visually over the top in terms of technology. They never touch a door knob, they just assume it will open automatically. The pace at which technology moves is not a normal rate for the rest of the world, even for the States."

Mills chose Tokyo's Liquid Room for the recording of his first, incendiary mix LP. Unlike the mass of superclub-endorsed, digitally-spiced mix CDs, Mills recorded the set live, retaining trace elements of his physical approach to DJing: glitches, scratches and whiplash backspins. The album's eleven tracks suggest the DJ act can lead to moments of profound personal enlightenment. "As the outsider, I became the highlighted spectator in the rush of organization," he writes. "Graciously transported from location to location, I quickly became a working figure in the system. I saw in the eyes of the insiders a schematic rendition of the destiny of mankind. I approached them in hopes that I might find another part of myself."

Mills' DJ performances are legendary. He uses three decks in tandem with a Roland TR-909 drum machine, playing only what he considers to be the most crucial section of a particular track, cutting back and forth between the decks at high speed, ripping records from the turntables and hurling them to the floor. The next step, he says, will be to "delete the turntables and use two 909s and a mixer, so it is all original and very tribal." But he has no desire to play his music live. "I made it once," he says. "I don't want to recreate it. If you want to hear it, it's on the record. I have a hard enough time just making it in the studio anyway. A lot of the stuff I do, I listen to it now and I can't figure out how I made it. If I had to do something live, it wouldn't be music, it would be something visual, something I hadn't done."

This philosophy of not recreating a track once it is completed extends to his policy of producing only one mix of a particular work. Mills feels that, like a painting or sculpture, the object must be finished and then put aside, a departure from the received dance music wisdom that if a thing is worth mixing, it is worth remixing. "The mix is done one time. If the track is five minutes and 15 seconds that's how long it took me to mix it and once it's finished that's it."

He says he is not always satisfied with the final mix, citing "19" and "The Cancer" as examples, "but I can't change them. I could go back and remix but I won't because what would be happening wouldn't be the same as when I made the track."

Mills does admit to one remix project, even if it will never be released. "Childhood," on *The Other Day*, is a downtempo track full of warm keyboard pads and delicate percussion. It was inspired by the birth of his daughter Maria. Mills has continued to remix the track as an audio diary documenting his relationship with Maria as she grows older. "Childhood" was made for my daughter shortly after she was born, then when she turned two I remixed the track again, and she's just turned three so I'll probably remix it again," he says. "I remix with regard to what character she is at the time, so it gets more interesting as time goes on. When she gets to about ten, I'll probably give the tape to her as a present." □ *The Other Side is released this month by Axis (through S&D)*



PHOTOS: JOHN LANGRISH

strangely moving loosed chords of "Mirina" and the thundering metallic beats of "10,000 Chariots." "Atlantis the city was shaped in a circular form," he explains. "There was a horse race track which held 10,000 chariots, then there was a garden and right at the centre there was a temple where Europa was seduced. Again, I had to look up all this information and then relate it to the vinyl itself."

If the X projects enabled Mills to refine his ideas for conceptual releases, his production style was starting to define itself emphatically on the series of *Waveform Transmission* albums. Volume 1 opens with "Phase 4." Driven by a rhythm which sounds like sheet metal howling in the midst of a hurricane, the work seems more like an extemporisation on overloading frequencies than anything constrained by the usual laws of music. "An experiment in filtering," is how Mills describes it. "That's where I learned to use filtering to create inflection and texture, and the melting in of tracks to give the impression that the track already existed, but just tuned into it."

Robert Hood took production cues on Volume 2, but Mills reprised some of the themes of the original on Volume 3 which appeared in 1994. "Phase 4" was to me quite parallel to "The Extremist", the first track on Volume 3. On each LP there was also a track called "DNA", and the last track was the most futuristic, "Hani-Like" and "Basic Human Design", which both lead into the next volume." Mills plans to release that long-awaited fourth volume later this year.

"To say it looks futuristic is valid, but only if you have seen the future" — from the sleeve notes for Jeff Mills' *Live At The Liquid Room, Tokyo, 1996*

Mills' notions of futurism parallel those posited by J.G. Ballard. "We have annexed the future into our present as merely one of those manifold alternatives open to

THE FOLIO
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the primer

Film music collectors will leave few stones unturned in their efforts to own a composer's complete recorded works, but even the most enthusiastic balk at taking on the colossal job-lot that is Ennio Morricone's recorded output. You'd need a long credit line and time to burn to accommodate over 600 CD and vinyl soundtracks and compilations that have been released by labels large and small around the world for the last 35 years. From early successes as an arranger and composer who virtually invented Italian pop in the 1950s, Morricone has written well over 350 scores for film and television, as well as pursuing in recent years an active side-career in composition for the concert hall. He is by far the most prolific film composer of all time, trumping even Max Steiner's 300-plus scores during the Studio era of the 1930s and 40s. A remarkable achievement for a composer who has worked almost entirely as a freelancer, Morricone is also one of a very select group of film composers, the other obvious one, regrettably, being John Williams, whose fame has travelled beyond the narrow borders of film music specialists. What makes Morricone unique, however, is his genius as an arranger and composer. The Italian musicologist Sergio Miceli has called him "the father of the modern arrangement", while Lawrence Stag in his book *Italian Westerns: The Opera Of Violence* goes even further. "Morricone is without a doubt one of the greatest composers of all time, whose imaginative arrangements and sometimes surreal use of instruments is quite unique. He is a perfect example of an avant garde composer who is capable of reinterpreting the danger and excitement into mainstream melodic orchestration."

From the pop-inspired Spaghetti Westerns, to the melancholic orchestrations of his later film scores, there is an unusually close relationship between image and music, such that the visuals seem to confirm the music rather than the other way around.

Born in Rome in 1928, the son of a night-club trumpet player, Morricone began to compose from an early age, initially by writing down popular songs heard from the radio and rearranging them. After spells playing with his father's bands, Morricone studied trumpet and composition at the prestigious Conservatory of Saint Cecilia. Later citing Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Miklos Rosza's soundtrack to *The Robe* as early influences, the Morricone sound was formed early on: an organic combination of big beat percussion, wordless chorales, tightly wound orchestrations and



ILLUSTRATION: SAVAGE PENCIL

An occasional series in which we offer a neophyte's guide to the must-have recordings of some of the names we like to drop a lot. This month, Russell Lack gets to grips with the iconoclastic film music of **Ennio Morricone**

sparse, angular foregrounds. Non-musical sounds such as typewriters, tin cans or telephones were freely incorporated in a way strikingly original for the time. During the 1950s Morricone wrote and arranged hundreds of songs for Italian singers as diverse as Mario Lanza, Gino Morandi, Peter Trevis and Mina. While these early successes secured his reputation as an arranger, his earliest film scores were not a success. The 1961 *Il Federato* (directed by Luciano Salce) and 1963's Italian-Spanish Western *Gudùghe At Red Sants*

(directed by Ricardo Blasco) were pedestrian hack-works that could have been recorded on any Hollywood back-lot. So disappointing were these early efforts that when childhood friend Sergio Leone heard them while he was thinking of approaching Morricone to score *A Fistful Of Dollars* in 1963, he decided not to offer the composer the commission. It was only when Leone heard Morricone's arrangements of the old Woody Guthrie song "Pathways Of Plenty" for the American singer Peter Trevis that he relented. Morricone's



treatment of the song incorporated all the trademark features of the Spaghetti Western score: a galloping rhythm track, the big, twanging guitar sound and unusual choral lines. The opening sequence to *A Fistful Of Dollars* is virtually a remake of the song. Leone's early films were visually startling, highly graphic exercises in onematic storytelling, overkillingly marrying sound to image in the spliced-up storyboard time of the comic strip. The Spaghetti Westerns reinvented the conventional American Western hero, adding a touch of existential angst represented by wordless longeurs in which music speaks louder. The 20 minute climax of *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*, where the three characters face each other down in a cemetery, derives its power entirely from Morricone's ability to capture human psychological processes with music. Leone had the rare good sense to allow Morricone to record music before the film was shot, so that action could be played

out in time to the music. While this approach is hardly ever used in film making, due to the usual constraints of time and money, the few instances where it has (Fellini's work with Nino Rota, Hitchcock's with Bernard Herrmann, to name a couple) evidence its ability to optimise the impact of music. Morricone's reputation was made with Leone's Dollars Trilogy (*A Fistful Of Dollars*, *For A Few Dollars More* and *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*). Through careful choosing of collaborators, such as Alessandro Alessandroni who provided the distinctive whistling, chorale and guitar work on *A Fistful Of Dollars*, Morricone reinvigorated the Western score, which had subsided for years on a diet of Apalachian romance imported from America.

While only about ten per cent of Morricone's total soundtrack work has been for Westerns, it is with this music that he is most identified. From the mid-1960s his output swelled to as many as five film scores a

the primer

month for directors as diverse as Dario Argento, Gillo Pontecorvo, Bernardo Bertolucci, Roman Polanski, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Brian De Palma, Franco Zeffirelli, John Boorman and Terence Malick. He won an Oscar for his score to Malick's *Days Of Heaven* (1978), and has since been nominated for *The Mission* (1986), *The Untouchables* (1987) and *Bugsy* (1991). In 1995 he won the prestigious Premio Rota (named after Nino Rota) for a lifetime's achievement in film composition. Since 1980

Morricone has devoted more of his time to non-film work, scoring many works for chamber quartet, concertos such as the *Concerto For Europe* (1988), as well as a large number of avant garde pieces. During the 1970s Morricone and a number of other film composers set up General Music, a label founded to promote the soundtrack. A substantial catalogue of European film music resulted, which

through ongoing licensing has kept much of Morricone's output in circulation. Given the size of Morricone's catalogue it is not surprising that the most popular CD releases in recent years have been compilations. Some of these attempt to divide his career by genre while others are chronological. The first three general compilations here offer a good place to start.

The Ennio Morricone Anthology: A Fistful Of Film Music

(BMG/Rhino R2 17858DAC2-1237)

An Ennio Morricone Anthology

(DRG 32908)

Ennio Morricone Main Titles 1965-1995

(DRG 32920)

The Rhino release is probably the best currently available compilation offering up broad coverage of Morricone's career highlights from the Spaghetti Westerns up to 1991's *Bugsy*. It includes the original main title themes from most of his best known soundtracks, including key tracks from *A Fistful Of Dollars*, *For A Few Dollars More*, *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*, *The Battle Of Algiers*, *Once Upon A Time In The West*, *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage*, *Exorcist II*, *The Mission*, *Cinema Paradiso* and *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* Organised primarily around main title themes, this two CD set functions as a basic road map through Morricone's many changes of musical style over the years. In much of the pre-1975 material, the music is directly inspired by the instrumentation, if not the rhythms, of rock. Whether wrapping musical strands around the Western genre, a crime saga, or family melodrama, Morricone's frequently nostalgic

orchestration usually manages not only to cut to the emotional core of the film's theme, but to also confound the expectations of genre. His highly personalised form of musical signature is, in the early stages of his career, couched in his eccentric choices of instrumentation and arrangements: cheap electric organs, ocarinas, out of tune brass instruments, hamstrung electric guitars, bits of scrap metal, and strangely arranged vocal passages used as instruments.

Both DRG releases cover less well-known ground, primarily from Morricone's mid-period European output, and present the fruits of his close collaboration with directors such as Mauro Bolognini, Alberto Bevilacqua and Sergio Sollima among others. While some of these soundtracks sound like the results of over-work on Morricone's part, the majority stand up well. The DRG Anthology goes a little deeper into a handful of films from the late 1960s and early 1970s such as *The Lady Coliph* (1970), *This Kind Of Love* (1971) and *Revolver* (1973). His stalling, off-kilter scherzos for the 1971 French thriller *Without Apparent Motive* and the ultra-black comedy *The Infernal* too illustrate his effortless command of the musical languages of suspense, utilising strongly juxtaposed sardonic themes underscored by electronic concrete sounds. While there are a number of duplications with the DRG Anthology, *The Man Times* collection covers more ground and contains a number of hard-to-find gems such as *Devil In The Brain* (1972) and *The Two Seasons Of Life* (1972). Compromised by its secondary life as an all-purpose love theme forked into the standard repertoire of the likes of James Last, the sweetly cloying "Chi Ma" theme is a typical example of Morricone's ability to distil the most appealingly breathy elements of his soundtracks such as Francis Lai's *Un Homme Et Une Femme* into a three minute symphony which has long outlasted the 1971 film *Modellama* for which it was written.

The Morricone Collection: Spaghetti Westerns

(RCA/BMG France 74321 26495)

An Ennio Morricone-Dario Argento Trilogy

(DRG 32911)

Part of a very useful six CD series that spices up the Morricone oeuvre by genre, the Western set contains most of the essential Spaghetti Westerns, making it a good one-shot buy for this most distinctive phase of his career. It includes excerpts from the 'Dollars' trilogy, the Leone epic *Once Upon A Time In The West* as well as a selection of the later Spaghetti Westerns such as *My Name Is Nobody*, *Duck You Sucker* and *A Fistful Of Dynamite*.

The second genre compilation provides a definitive and startling overview of one of Morricone's most interesting creative collaborations. The Italian director Dario Argento specialised in a particularly visceral brand of erotic, pulpish horror that briefly defined Italian producers of the early 1970s. As with Leone,

Morricone was given a large degree of creative freedom to redefine the staple elements of horror scoring. Three soundtracks — *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage* (1969), *The Cat Of Nine Tails* (1970), *Four Flies On Grey Velvet* (1971) — are presented more or less complete. Like Goblin, the trippy, obtuse Italian avant-rockers who also scored for Argento (most notably 1976's *Supra*), Morricone places music uncompromisingly in the foreground of the picture. The *Bird* soundtrack fuses one of Morricone's familiar, oddly fluttered, slightly discordant "to-to-to-to" chorused openings with a series of much darker minimalist patchworks incorporating chimes, Electronics, discordant damped percussion, amplified human

1970s with his experimental group Nuova Consonanza. In its anarchic, brocaded style it predates John Zorn's cut-up compositional approach by some 15 years, a debt Zorn skillfully acknowledged on his Morricone tribute album *The Big Gundown*.

The Mission

(Virgin 90567)

The Thing

(Varese Sarabande VSD5278)

Two strongly contrasting complete scores from Morricone's more recent career. *The Mission* (1986)



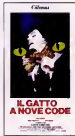
The maestro conducts

heartbeats, organic shudders, stifled breathing, elements inspired by Morricone's knowledge of post-war European avant garde composers such as Berio and Scelsi, and even free jazz, all combining to create a decidedly unsettling aural image, not unlike Nick Cave's underrated soundtrack to John Hillcoat's *The Ghosts Of The Civil Dead* (1987). *The Cat Of Nine Tails* soundtrack is lush, jazzier stuff typified by the elegant main theme, although scored with many unexpected melodic twists, turns and digressions. There are a number of experiments with non-musical sounds: a distant, echoing woman's voice singing a lullaby is foregrounded by scraping cellos, random note clusters and a staggering bass. The third soundtrack mixes kitsch psychedelia with a fully orchestrated suite (amalgamated from the original soundtrack) that veers wildly from a rock "Alleluiah" chorus to passages of demerol humming to score the story of a rock drummer blackmailed by a witness to a murder he committed. The suite is a good example of the kind of non-film work Morricone was producing during the

score is one of his most accomplished and was responsible for restoring the composer's US career (earlier ditched when Morricone could not achieve the pay scales he was used to in Europe). If there is a central theme to the score it is the redemptive power of music itself. The film's subject, centring on the conflict between the Guarani Indians of South America and the Jesuit priests sent to convert them to Christianity in the 1750s, lends itself to an interesting musical treatment. There are three main musical elements: a haunting oboe theme, a post-Renaissance choral theme (shades of Carl Orff), and the Indians' own pipe and drum based music. The oboe theme is generally used to illustrate the redemptive possibilities of the Jesuit faith, personified by the Gabel character who charms the Guarani with the instrument at the beginning of the film, winning their trust. Significantly, the narrator says at one point "With an orchestra, the Jesuits could have subdued the whole continent." Music is presented throughout as a healing force capable, but never actually

managing to overcome the political struggles depicted

The Thing (1982) is starkly modernist, blending dark, brooding swathes of orchestrated menace with electronic passages summoning up references as diverse as Bernard Herrmann and John Cage. It is one of the few Morricone scores to prominently feature a synthesizer. Director John Carpenter scored most of his other films himself, using basic electronic washes to generate atmosphere, and Morricone has subsequently claimed that he felt pressured to follow suit. Rather than using the electronics to imitate conventional instruments, Morricone abandons the traditional musical scale to exploit the pure tonal qualities of the



unfulfilled hopes of dislocated immigrants were channelled into illegal mob activities. The score was written for Leone before filming began and there is a fascinating documentary on the making of the film showing Robert De Niro rehearsing close-up shots to camera, choreographing his performance to the score which is heard as playback on the set.

1900 is Bertolucci's deeply flawed but defiantly baroque family saga which in its full version runs at more than 300 minutes. Morricone's score is clearly fashioned on Verdi, whose death occurs on the same day as the two main characters in the story are born. Only extracts from the score have survived the transition to CD, but what remains hints at Morricone's



synthesizer (echoes again of his work in *Nuova Consonanza*), resulting in one of the most interesting (and rare) electronic soundtracks.

Stanno Tutti Bene (aka Everybody's Fine) (CAM COS001)

Once Upon A Time In America
(Mercury 822 334-2)

1900: Novocento
(SCLC 7033)

Once Upon A Time In The West
(RCA 4736 2R)

Bernardo Bertolucci once said that, without knowing it, Morricone has written two or three possible national anthems for Italy (which is ironic considering that his early experimental compositions eschewed nationalism



tendencies). They might have picked any of these four soundtracks, all of which could be comfortably run up a flagpole and present Morricone as his most fervently nationalistic, whether covering homeland or the Italian Diaspora in New York or the Western plains. The soundtrack to Giuseppe Tomasi's *Stanno Tutti Bene* (1990) won him Italy's prestigious David di Donatello award. Like Tomasi's previous film, the international hit *Cinema Paradiso*, *Stanno Tutti Bene* is also a bittersweet charmer, concerned with themes of ageing, memory and irrevocable change. The film presents modern Italy in a process of sweeping change and weaves a web of complex emotions between the main characters. By comparison with the more popular score to *Cinema Paradiso*, Morricone's score here is more fully realised and more introspective, relying less on affecting melody and more on broader chamber-like adagio patterns to make this film almost Bergsonian in its patterning of the tensions beneath modern family life.

Once Upon A Time In America (1984) scores a complex, sprawling ambitious film that marked Leone's return to the cinema after a 12 year absence. The film spans five decades of the entangled relationship between two men on the fringes of New York's underworld through a variety of time-travelling techniques: flashbacks, flash-forwards, dreams and memories. Morricone's score serves as navigator through this maze-like narrative and parallels in its epic structure *The Godfather*, both films focusing on how the

power with familiar yet fresh takes on harmonic progression, working squarely within a romantic tradition of film scoring.

Sergio Leone's masterpiece, *Once Upon A Time In The West*, is unusual in that there is no title music, Leone amplifying natural sounds instead. There are three main lyrical themes used, however. A vocalising soprano sings a haunting melody which eventually turns into a full soprano performance, a string motif that is interwoven with electric guitars, and the familiar Morricone trademark, a harmonica. Often the three musical figures are played simultaneously, to mirror visual cross-cutting. Elsewhere Morricone parodies a Western style clip-clip theme which plays around the grizzled character Cheyenne, accompanying it in different versions with bongo, honky tonk piano and most ominously, a simple human whistle.

Even when playing on nationalistic musical references Morricone's music continues to evade easy categorization. You could perhaps isolate his tendency to avoid traditional symphonic development, concentrating instead on creating contrapuntal overlays, particularly vocals over a counter melody, which get at the thematic heart of the film rather than the incidentals demanded by a particular action sequence. (RCA/BMG releases are distributed through BMG, DRG through New Note/Amadeo, Virgin through EMI, Varese Sarabande through Amadeo, Mercury through PolyGram, Cam and SCLC are available on import.

invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of . . .

Sonic Boom

Tested by Mike Barnes

Sonic Boom, aka Pete Kember, formed Spacemen 3 with Jason Pierce in Rugby, 1982 when both were still in their mid-teens. Over a nine year period they emerged as one of the most innovative and influential UK rock groups, playing an uncompromisingly minimal music influenced by The Velvet Underground, Suicide and The Stooges. The group's sonic assault was also overtly psychedelic — Kember has always been an unapologetic and avid drug user. After releasing a series of increasingly Ambient, drone-based albums, the group disintegrated rancorously in 1991, Pierce going on to form Spiritualized. Kember, meanwhile, had released a solo single, "Angel", using the name Sonic Boom in 1989, and in a new collaborative move formed another group, Spectrum, in 1990. In 1992 he instigated the drone/Impro project Experimental Audio Research (EAR). The initial recordings were with saxophonist Kevin Martin (God, Techno Animals), guitarist Kevin Shields from My Bloody Valentine, and AMM drummer Eddie Prevost. This music was eventually released in 1995 as *Beyond The Pole*. EAR's collaboration with Thomas Koner, the Koner Experiment, has recently been released on Mille Plateaux. Kember also runs his own label, Space Age Recordings. The Jukebox took place in Kember's house in Rugby, in a front room full of vintage analogue synths and nose-making paraphernalia.

THE PREMIERS

"Get On This Plane" from *East Side Sound* (Dionysus)

Don't know who it is, that's for sure. [Kember leaves the room briefly and comes back with a red plastic case. He opens the lid to reveal a portable record player with a built-in toy keyboard.] You can play along to it, it's really cool. A friend of mine in America sent it to me. I've got a thing about things in suitcases. [Referring to the track] It's obviously some 60s garage punk band like The Chocolate Watchband or something. It may even be The Chocolate Watchband.

It's a group called The Premiers. They were a bunch of Chicano punks from LA. This was recorded in 1966.

Peculiar guitar sound. I like this sort of stuff but I'm not very up on it. The guy at Bomp [Records, Greg Shaw] gave me the whole set of Pebbles, like 80 albums or whatever. Heavy going. [Kember goes to look at his record rack] I've got Pebbles 1 through 28, I've got *English Freakbeat* 1 through 4, and then I've got the *Pebbles High in the Mid 60s* thing, and there's literally another 30 or so.

Did you get into 60s garage/psychedelia prior to Spacemen 3?

Oh yeah, we knew about that stuff when we first started definitely, particularly stuff like 13th Floor Elevators, Electric Prunes and some of those bands. That had a little of early MC5 to it as well, that track.

And the riff is pre-Stooges, too.

I think The Triggs and The Kinks were at the root of a lot of that Stooges. Triggerama, as I like to call it. The Velvet Underground are a band that you can't really

pinpoint — you can tell that they're derived from rock 'n' roll type stuff but you can't really pinpoint it. Some of The Triggs' stuff is as close as you get.

This track must have been recorded just at the time drug-taking and making music became overtly linked. There are some very coy references in the lyrics.

Yeah, and even if they weren't taking drugs they had that sort of youthful exuberance which leads people to take drugs anyway. It probably had a lot to do with the producers and engineers in the studio where it was happening. A lot of those guys in studios tended to be the sort of people who were into musique concrete and sound collages — studio people like messing around with sound. Bands would say to them "We want it to be wiggled out on the solo", and those guys would really help contributing vocals. I think it was a lot to do with LSD. In the late 60s it got into everything. There were a lot of drug references in kids' TV programmes, whether it was *The Magic Roundabout* or *Joe 90* or whatever.

SUN RA & HIS MYTH SCIENCE ARKESTRA

"Moon Dance" from *Cosmic Tones For Mental Therapy* (Evidence)

Very weird. It's very lo-fi. When's this from? 67, 68?

It's a bit earlier: 1963.

When it first came on it reminded me a little of Joe Meek's experimental stuff. Very weird, almost calypso rhythms. Is it a band I'm likely to have known?

I think so.

Band in 63. Are they from Germany? [The next track begins] This does sound German.

It's Sun Ra.

Oh, right. I don't think I've heard any Sun Ra this early. Sounds really good, though. I thought it was 67-68 post-psychedelic.

When did you get into his music?

1983/84, I suppose. It was through The MCS, stuff like "Seaship," their adaptation of something written by him. I can't say I've heard the original. Obviously The MCS manager John Sinclair managed Sun Ra. I think he turned The MCS onto all that stuff.

Spacemen 3 were meant to do some gigs with him but it got cancelled, he didn't come on his tour. You hear horror stories about him. AMM brought Sun Ra over to Europe for the first time in 65, I think. They had a nightmare time with him. He was very awkward. Apparently when he arrives in a town the promoter has to drive him round finding hotel beds that are suitable.

It's always weird when you play with bands you admire. Sometimes it can be the ultimate let-down. I remember when we played with Suicide the first time it was very good. It was an all-dayer Hawkwind show and you can imagine what Hawkwind fans thought of Suicide — they couldn't get enough stuff to throw at them, which of course is the way to see Suicide, because once they get their backs put up they're really good. I've seen them when everyone's been fawning and cheering them from the moment they walk onstage and they were crap.

WHITE NOISE**"The Visitation" from White Noise (Island)**

I don't know who this is. Might be Pink Floyd. Is it English psychedelia?

Mind of. It's from 1969.

There are some great sounds on it. See these are really like concrete sounds — often it had a lot to do with the engineers.

This is a studio-based project. It's White Noise.

[Surprised] Oh, is it? I've never heard this. This is [producer/engineer] David Vorhaus, and I think [sound engineers] Derek Derbyshire and Brian Hodgson were involved with White Noise, they were from the BBC [Radiophonic Workshop] and did all the Doctor Who stuff on tapes and oscillators and loops. Before White Noise they had a group called Unit Delta Plus with [composer] Peter Zinoveff.

I'm putting out some CDs of the music that was done in the EMS studio [which was owned by Zinoveff] in the 60s and located in a house in Putney. The EMS stuff [early electronic equipment, including an EMS synthesizer which Kember owns] was sold to finance a studio that was the first computer music studio in the country. They did a lot of mad experimental stuff. Harrison Birtwistle, [Hans Werner] Henze and some other notable composers.

Peter Zinoveff was a very good experimental composer, but as he was surrounded by people like Birtwistle he felt a bit deficient in their shadow. His wife was some sort of heress who financed the whole caboodle, and they just did tons of electronic music in this studio. Everyone who's heard the tapes has just

flipped. The music is amazing, it really is some of the most far out shit, and when people hear it it will totally redress the balance of how people think of British experimental music in that period because most of it wasn't released. [Kember then plays me the original all-electronic version of Birtwistle's *Chronometer* which was recorded at EMS].

AMM**"Later During A Flaming Riviera Sunset" from****AMM Music (ReR)**

This sounds like someone having sex with their cymbals. I know this. AMM. I love this. That sounds like a transistor radio. Is Cornelius Cardew on this? [He is. Kember produces a graphic score of Cardew's *Treasure*].

It's their first album from 1966.

If you listen to a guitar, you can picture a guitar in your head and someone playing it. When you hear AMM you're hard pushed to picture anyone doing anything, particularly if you've not seen them live. There's something very primal about their sound. It really does sound like the music you might have heard when planets were being created. You can have a sound that sounds like the dawn of time or the feeling of being in love, but if you can see that it's someone dragging an instrument around the stage making this noise then it just loses some of its mystique. A friend of mine came round and under the influence of DMT [an intense hallucinogen] I put the AMM CD on and within minutes the guy's head whipped round and he said, 'What's this? This is just the most amazing shit I've ever heard'.

Were you improving much prior to EAR?

The only improvisation I'd done before was in this club we ran called the Reverberation Club in Rugby from about late B5 to mid B7, this thing we'd call freeform freakouts where we'd take everything that basically you could hit, bash, drag, pluck or whatever and deposit them in a room. We'd start off with people who could basically play the stuff — something like 'Cherry' by Suicide — and then anyone who wanted to could get involved. Things would very quickly turn into these tribal, rhythmical stomps, people just freakin' out, really.

ARNOLD DREYBLATT & THE ORCHESTRA OF EXCITED STRINGS**Extract from *Model Excitation* (India Navigation)**

[As I take the record out of its sleeve] We're onto vinyl now. We should play it on that [he points to the platter record player, then plays The Tornados' "Telstar" on the toy keyboard. The Dreyblatt track starts]. The guitar sounds like stuff we did in Spacemen 3 early on, long things with one chord. [Mayo Thompson?] Is it new or old?

It's from 82. It's not actually guitar, it's modified double bass, heavily gurdy and organ. The main guy's American. Glenn Branca?

Arnold Dreyblatt. He was a student of LaMonte Young in the 70s.

This is actually good. I like it. You can leave that one here. What is it about the drone that appeals to you?

It seemed to be the strongest way to sum up a lot of

intense emotions, I suppose — there's something very seductive about it. And the more music I've heard, the more obvious it's been that most ethnic musics are drone-based. Scottish and Irish music, most African, most Indian, most North American Indian. Sometimes they change to a second drone. It's always an interval of a fifth, which is like the rock 'n' roll change.

And rock 'n' roll, of course, always appealed. When we only did two or three chords in the Spacemen they tended to be those fifth relationship type things, very primitive rock 'n' roll. We did feel that we were regressing rock 'n' roll back to its roots a little bit, trying to be more primordial. I was always very impressed with songs with two or three chords that could have one note that didn't change in each of them. That always appealed to me, the continuity, sort of ebbing between notes rather than distinct changes.

I noticed you've got a lot of reggae albums.

I've got a lot of Lee Perry, about 30 albums. I love his stuff. There are strong elements of gospel in it, R&B, I really like that. Staple Singers — I love that stuff up to about 65 or 66.

There always seemed to be a yearning gospel vibe in the songs that you wrote for Spacemen 3 and Spectrvm.

Yeah, I very much like that whole lineage, early blues, field holler type stuff, there's a lot of raw emotion in it. Not drone-based at all, of course. It is pretty much based on two chords, the man and the fifth, like in rock 'n' roll. There's something very steady, very satisfying, very comforting about that stuff. There is some sort of inherent truth in the fifth.

MORTON SUBOTNICK**"Part 1" from *Silver Apples Of The Moon* (Nonesuch)**

Oh, I know what this is. Morton Subotnick, *Silver Apples Of The Moon*. I prefer *The Wild Bull* but I love them both. Partly I love what he did and partly the equipment he used. It's all very bizarre. The Buchla Box. It was a synthesizer basically. Capacitance key board, just metal plates that you touched. He still makes mad controllers.

This piece sounds very weird and presumably isn't reproducible.

See, this sort of stuff I really love. It's electronically generated, but it's down to random probably by what pitch you'll get. Stockhausen was very much into the classical version of random voltages, and I think the reason they pretty much invented boxes to do it was because concrete composers were doing it using tone rows of tape where they would cut up lengths and then randomly put it together to see what kind of sound they got. I think it had its birth in that.

You really don't know what can happen next in a piece like this. It goes from these little tinkly sounds to screaming, testing metal sounds, car crash noises.

Morton Subotnick went into use computers rather than synthesizers, which are analogue computers effectively. Most people now use computers in the studio, and most churn out the same shit, it all sounds like the fucking same, groovy dance music. Then you hear what these people were doing with computers, this beautiful, intuitive, probabilistic stuff.



signal

Mazumi Akita: **Merzbow** project distills

the most vicious elements of hard rock,



3D H

Boom! The speakers buckle and the air pressure shoots up by about 1000 pounds per square inch. Static charges ripple across pitted surfaces. The ears pound with blood. For what feels like eternity but is in fact only a few minutes, the whine of electrical circuits feeding back impacts on the ritual abuse of unknowable objects. The performance ends as abruptly as it began, leaving a void of ringing silence, signaling another brief period of rest before Masami Akita continues his long, ongoing quest to harness the infernal noise that roars at the heart of our century.

Since the early 1980s, via a formidable number of cassettes, CDs, LPs, low-key performances, theatre and conceptual works, Akita, better known as Merzbow, has been chasing down rock's essence, distilling its most noxious ingredients into hallucinogenic brews. A recent, fax-based commune with this extraordinary Japanese performance artist underlined how rigorous is his concept of Merzbow — what it signifies, how it functions, and how it can be reconciled within both Eastern and Western traditions.

"In my mind Merzbow is my deconstruction of rock music, a mixing of the only extreme part," explains Akita. "I felt there were no records which solely consisted of the guitar-destroying part of The Who or Jimi Hendrix, the ending noise coda of [King Crimson's] '21st Century Schizoid Man', the feedback guitar music of The Stooges, the violent knife performance of Keith Emerson. I liked that part of rock music but unfortunately there was more to it than that — stupid vocals, melody, rhythm. So I recognized the concept of mixing only the violent, noisy, brutal, sick part of rock in a very different way."

"The point was that rock players seemed to use violence almost as some kind of emotional gimmick, so I tried to use violence with no emotion or feeling, more in the sound itself and my approach to sound equipment. I found the most violent way to use sound was to overload with feedback. It's very sick for the equipment but I found that cruel sound nice, like the death scream of electronics. I thought creating feedback was like masturbation of equipments. This was an idea that fit well with my early sound research."

to noise

free jazz and sado-masochism into an unparalleled noise aesthetic. Interview by David Keenan

That research began in the early 70s when Akita began to formulate ideas of all-out freedom play, initially within a group context alongside his school friend Kiyoshi Mizutani, who appears to devastating effect on early Merzbow cassettes such as *Akita Merrie* and *Paradoxia Paradoxa*, abusing organ, violin and tapes as Akita screams through an alto saxophone. Both tapes were initially distributed through Modern Music in Tokyo, the record shop which eventually spawned the sainted PSF label.

"We were inspired by King Crimson, especially their *Earthbound* album, and played some cover songs without vocals in brutal arrangements," Akita explains. "None of my 70s bands had names, we played mostly in the studio and had no connection with the music scene. We were also inspired by free music on labels such as RMP and Inoue. I'm a drummer so I was especially inspired by the extraordinary playing of Han Bennink and the pulse-beat drumming of Sunny Murray, Andrew Cyrille, Milford Graves. I couldn't play the drums as well as what I was trying to find. One of the reasons for this was that my start was in home recording and not live performance. I was inspired more from records but there weren't really any good avant garde

Japanese recordings that I could find at that time.

"I started Merzbow in 1980 after playing in my improvised rock band until 1974. Surrealism was probably my biggest influence, especially Artaud and Bataille, both of whom I discovered in high school."

For Akita, the Merzbow project was an attempt to realise a "surrealism in sound", a quality he had perceived in the music of Captain Beefheart, King Crimson and Can, but which lay dormant because those groups were "too musical".

"I appreciated the punk and industrial movements in the late 70s," he explains, "but I was looking for more of a big harsh electric noise. I'm very interested in the texture of sound itself and I would describe my way of making music as 'automatism of sound texture'. My theoretical basis is in physical sound itself, a fetishism of Noise."

Seen in this light, Merzbow music becomes a visceral plundering of the subconscious, a direct channeling of amplified desire given physical soundform.

"My basic idea is that the connection between S&M and noise is fetishism," he explains. "S&M is a fetishistic approach to the human body. Noise is the same for sound. That's the reason for my interest in both areas, and of course, eroticism was the most important theme in surrealism."

Akita's involvement in the Japanese S&M scene goes beyond musical concerns. "At the moment I am researching and writing some books on it. In 1989 I met an underground Japanese bondage group called Kinbiken and we started to work together. I also do some soundtrack as Right Brain Audio which is especially designed for their videos."

Can the kind of brutalising noise which defines Akita's work in Merzbow impact at an emotional as well as physical level? "I think emotion has a neutral existence. I remember Zappa saying people getting special feelings from major or minor keys of music is stupid. That way music is more neutral existence — my music doesn't represent any happy or sad emotion. I'm interested in creating a more abstract energy or definite power of vibration. You've got to realise that atom is only energy, it's got no special feeling, though most people seem to get fear or a cold feeling from that energy, but I think it's nothingness that is musically beautiful."

Much of the new Japanese music now coming to prominence in the West arrives in conveniently wacky packages (ie conforming to cultural stereotypes). Compared to groups such as Boredoms, Ruins, and most of the God Mountain stable, the Merzbow project can appear couched in an impenetrable veneer of high-sensuousness.

"I think there's a lot of black humour and parody in my release," counters Akita. "I especially like to use parodies of 70s Progressive rock. I used to read *Melody Maker* every week in the early 70s and they were covering loads of Progressive labels such as Vertigo, Neon, Dawn and Chrysmis. My parodies always hark back to that period. In fact I'm using a lot of samples of the likes of East Of Eden, Osibisa, Sabbath right now. I even gave a copy of my *Venerology* CD to Tom Iorini when Black Sabbath played here two years ago."

The early 70s were a particularly intense and creative decade for new music in Japan — Masayuki Takayanagi's New Directions were digging deep into guitar-driven noise improv, and Kaoru Abe was engaged in Albert Ayler-esque explorations

of alto sax, harmonica and piano (Abe was dead by 1978 — an overdose, fortunately the PSF and OIW labels have a great run of archival releases, particularly OIW's *Last Date*). Incus LPs were appearing in Tokyo shops and the cnc/promoter Aquara Aida had started promoting concerts by the likes of Milford Graves and Derek Bailey (one of which is documented on Bailey's *Aida LP*). The scene probably peaked in 1973 with the *Inspiration and Power 14* festival in Shinkyo which showcased the likes of Takayangi, Yoshizawa Motoharu and Yosuke Yamashita (no The Festival provided a vital and formative experience for many present day Japanese musicians: Osomo Yoshida, Keiji Haino and Akita himself).

"It was a big fan of Masayuki Takayangi. I was very shocked when I first saw his New Direction unit in the 70s. It looked like Derek Bailey doing free rock! They had two bass drums just like a heavy rock band. I got to see Abe Kaoru once. He was

Akita is ambivalent about the notion of Merzbow music as entertainment. "It can be entertainment but not for everyone. Somebody can feel entertainment from my sound in the same way that S&M is entertainment only for those people who have lust and knowledge." When I press him to expand on the latter half of this statement, he replies cryptically, "Kinkaku is only for people who know Kinkaku well."

Akita claims that "the only contemporary rock music I listen to is grindcore or sludgecore stuff", and he seems genuinely bemused by the new *Scumtron: Tribute To Merzbow* CD, a remix project featuring the likes of Autecore, Panasonic, Bernhard Guter and Russell Haswell. "I suppose I should say thank you and it's good that some Techno people like my music, although I wouldn't say that Scumtron is very representative of the current state of Techno — I'd like to think it's a glimpse of the Techno of the future. I'm interested in Techno in that it triggered a new perception of



PHOTO: SHUJI HOSOKAWA



PHOTO: SABA LUKONER

the drummer of Corrective Improvisation Group which included Keiji Haino on saxophone, and I remember him destroying it in the middle of the audience. More often, though, I would see Haino playing with *Last Arra* in the early 70s. Then he was already playing freeform rock when most Japanese groups were simply aping Western rock like Cream, Blind Faith or Zeppelin. I also saw the early line-up of Yosuke Yamashita two many times. They had this real crazy drummer [probably Moriyama Takeo], who looked like Andrew Cyrille meets John Bonham.

"Takehisa Kōsugi was always mysterious to my young eye and I saw his band Taj Mahal Traveller many times. The key performance for me, though, was when they played in one of the free concerts of the early 70s. I'll always remember this one guy who sat on stage just playing *Takuan Ishi* [a stone used for making Japanese pebbles]."

The 70s free scene in Japan provided a unique springboard for Akita's increasingly outward-bound musical explorations, but he was still searching for a unique and personal sound-response.

"What I was trying to do was mix pulse drums with feedback chaos guitar," he says referring to his early work with *Kyōshi Mizutani*. "Otherwise we played in a friend's band who were playing copies of *Zappa*, *Beethoven* and *Soft Machine*. After a few years we played a lot of ad-libs and our sound began to become more free, both stylistically and conceptually. After the duo ended I started to record drum solos with feedback. Gradually the noise part became more important to me and it became Merzbow. I always used lots of percussion in my early recordings because I think percussion is basically noisy."

hearing — for a few ears things like the sound of insects or a freezer makes good Techno. That's interesting."

Another recent release is *The Prosperity Of Vice: The Misfortune Of Virtue*, which contains the music Akita composed to accompany a play of the same name presented by *Romantica*, an extreme, conservative girls' theatre group dedicated to the god Eros. The CD was issued under Akita's own name, which suggests it stands apart from the rest of the Merzbow project.

"I found the most violent way to use sound was to overload with feedback. I found that cruel sound nice. I thought creating feedback was like masturbation of equipment."

"Merzbow is totally mine," he replies, "but when we play live we have a unit consisting of myself, Reiko A and Bara. I didn't use the name Merzbow for this particular project because my motivation for the piece was different in that I was making music for something else, not purely Merzbow project." Indeed, the album is the least Merzbow-sounding release to date, the noise aesthetic cut

with electronic balms and subliminal ringing, an unexpected head-soak of a record.

As for future plans, there's the imposing prospect of a 50 CD box set due from Melbourne's Extreme label which should include almost all of Merzbow's past vinyl and early cassette releases, as well as 20 CDs of unreleased tracks and eight CDs of collaborations with Australian Techno artists. All this plus two new CDs out of Canada and the US with "plenty of Moog and EMS", and a collaboration with *Zbigniew Karkowski*, on top of which Akita vows he "won't stop releasing all my usual new recordings." It's a phenomenal schedule which he justifies with deadpan logic. "I've no reason to stop." Scumtron is released this month by *Blast First* (through *RTMDSO*). *The Prosperity Of Vice* is out now on *iCite* (through *Vital*).



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charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

15 Kisses

Squarepusher — Hard Normal Daddy (Warp)
Dom & Optical — Quadrant 6 (Moving Shadow)
Ganger — Fore (Domino)
Roni Size/Reprazent — New Forms (Talking Loud)
Hospital Recordings — Ultrasound (Hospital)
Roy Davis Jr & Jay Junior —
 Egyptian Jazz (Pleasure)
Back & Forth — Reverse Introspect EP (Free Range)
Fuxa — Fuxa (Che)
The Mighty Boop — L'Element Manquant (Yellow)
Optical — To Shape The Future (Metahedz)
Various — Soma 5D (Soma)
Dnecut — EP 1 (Hombre)
Itchy Genies — The Gate (Ultimate Dilemma)
Da Lata — Travels EP (SaneWrite)
Jim Tenor — Can't Stay With You Baby
 (Ashley Thomas Mix) (Warp)
 Compiled by Matt Thompson, RSO 102 FM, Manchester,
 Mon-Thurs, 10pm-2am

Night Ragas 15

Ustad Ali Akbar Khan — Plays Also (AMPM)
Riley Lee/Michael Ashkil/Michael Atherton —
 Shoolhaven Rise (Celestial Harmonies)
Alan Posselt/Aneesh Pradhan — Ragas Of Dawn
 And Twilight (New World Productions)
Trance Mission — Head Light (City Of Tribes)
Sheila Chandra — Quest (Caroline/Indigo)
Terry Riley — Songs For The Ten Voices Of The Two
 Prophets (Kuckuck/Celestial Harmonies)
Per Tjernberg — They Call Me (Rub-A-Dub)
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Guitar Trek — Guitar Trek II (ABC)
Kawang Khecho — Kitaro's World Of Music (DOMO)
Sheila Dhar — Voyage Inmeur (Ocora)
Triad Of The Bow — Ornamentation (Release)
Vicki Hansen — Earth Heart (Fairy Godmother)
Wadaiko Ichiro — Wadaiko Ichiro (Biem/Stemira)
 Compiled by Hossein Ben Amel, Night Ragas Music, Off The
 Grid, Rado 200, Canberra, Australia, Sundays 11pm-3am

15 Leaves

Speedy J — As The Bubble Expands (Nova/Mute)
Kevin Frost — Ky-funk-e-stuff (H)
Various — Invisible Soundtracks, Macro 1 (Leaf)
Natural Essence — Injury (Sirkus)



Archie Shepp

Can — Victim C (UNKLE Mix) (Mute)
The Sons Of Silence — Silence FM (Leaf)
ACR — Yeah Boy (DJ Die Mix) (Rob's Records)
A Small Good Thing — Block (Leaf)
Docal — Endgame (Leaf)
Mr YT — Brand New Day (Generations)
Monolake — Lantau (Chien Reaction)
Max Brennan — Omega Point (Sublime)
Schtrax — Feel So Real (Schtrax)
Margoo — Margoo EP (Lo Recordings)
György Ligeti — Atmospheres (Wergo)
 Compiled by Tony Marley, Leaf Records, London

Honest Jon's 15

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Alice Coltrane — A Monastic Trio (Impulse!)
DJ Sapo — Lawnmower Man (24K)
Scuba — Scuba (White Label)
Faze Action — Plans And Designs (Nuphone)
Lee Perry — Arkology (Island)
Jeru The Damaja — Me, Not The Paper (Payday)
Kevin Yost — Land Of The Lost (Guidance)
Bo Diddley — Rare And Well Done (MCA/Chess)
Sun Ra — Stardust From Tomorrow (Leo)
Hydrabates — Volume 3 (Hydra)
Ken Ishii — X-Mix (Studio K7)
Glen Brown — Termination Dub (Blood And Fire)
Sonny Simmons — Judgment Day (CIMP)

Alexander Hope — Never Can Get Away
 (Slip N' Slide)

Compiled by Honest Jon's Records, 278 Portobello Road,
 London W1D

The Office Ambience

Susanne Brookes — Sharing The Sunhat (Disko B)
Ground Zero — Cosmo Aid (Creativeman Mix)
Archie Shepp — Four For Trane (Impulse!)
David Grubbs — Banana, Cabbage, Potato, Lettuce,
 Onion, Orange (Table Of The Elements)
Larry Young/Joe Gallivan/Nicholas —
 Love Cry/Want (newjazz.com)
Praxis — Transmutation Live (Douglas Music)
Various — Soliloquy Of Chaos (Shi-ra-nu)
House On Mars — Cache Coeur Nail EP (Too Pure)
Teiji Ito — Meshes (What Next? Recordings)
Yo La Tengo — Autumn Sweater (u-zu remix)
 (Haradon)
Cristian Vogel — All Music Has Come To An End
 (Tresor)
Can — Sacrege (Spoon/Mute)
Banyan — Banyan (Cybercave)
Pierre Henry/Metamorphose — Messe Pour Le
 Temps Present (Philips)
Various — Invisible Soundtracks, Macro 1 (Leaf)
Goran Vejvoda — Tykko Moon-OST (Makino)
 Compiled by The Wire Sound Systems

sound check

Into the hot: May's selected CDs, albums and 12"s

William Orbit contemplates
remixing Pierre Henry:
reviewed page 54



Derek Bailey
Music And Dance
REVIEWED 201 CD

Jim O'Rourke
Happy Days
REVIEWED 202 CD

Reverant is the branch of veteran guitarist John Fahey, his latest label venture since breaking free from his own Takoma Records outlet which was responsible for releasing Fahey's important early releases. Takoma was also instrumental in providing a recording base for many other fine guitarists including Leo Kottke, Peter Lang and Robbie Basho, all of whom were in tune with the Country-bluesy-guitar-picking style that Fahey had so elegantly adopted. Reverant, however, is a completely different pad for a variety of musicians to touch down on, although these first two releases suggest that the initial idea for the label was to

produce a revitalized version of the original blueprint.

Bailey and Fahey certainly have a lot in common as guitarists. Both have been slotted into genre boxes that neither of them really fit (talk for Fahey, jazz for Bailey), but they have steadfastly refused to conform to the lazy dictates of others. *Music And Dance* is a fine example of Bailey's creative stubbornness — a set of two live recordings from 1980 (where he was accompanying Japanese dancer Hin Tanaka in a small Parisian glass-roofed space called La Forge) that edge even further away from the loathed jazz tag and enter unmapped territory. Until now "Ron Dance" and "Saturday Dance" were only available as a private cassette, so it is to Reverant's credit that they can now be heard in all their primitive (yet spectacular) glory by a wider audience. The second highlight takes place during "Ron Dance" when, after much interplay between Bailey's ringing guitar tones and Tanaka's percussive

body slapping, the heavens open to add an unexpected drum solo of rain to the proceedings that drowns out the performers but becomes a part of the performance. Improvisation doesn't get any better than this. "Saturday Dance" is something special too, especially when Bailey slides into a loop of sustained feedback drone which is guaranteed to raise the scalp of the most jaded experimental music lover.

Jim O'Rourke's disc attempts a similar trick, but while Derek's drone work was spontaneous, Jim's is a controlled, escalating and somewhat overlong (40 minutes plus) heavily-gurdy drage into which his acoustic guitar gently weaves and eventually disappears. The piece appears to have been conceived as an unashamed tribute to both Fahey and minimalist pioneer Tony Conrad, and is a pleasantly enough diversion, but the Bailey disc remains the marker which all future Reverant releases should aim for.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Reviewed this month:

Derek Bailey Tim Berne's
Bloodcount **Graham**
Bowers Can **James**
Carter Quartet Carl Craig
George Crumb Ganger
Genf Gentle **Giant Trilok**
Gurtu Charlie Haden & Pat
Metheny **Pierre Henry**
Lateef & Lynce Born
Mause Morphogenesis
Music Of Indonesia Jim
O'Rourke **Organum** Lee
Perry **The Pharoahs**
Porter Ricks **Michael**
Prime Enrico Rava
George Russell **Living**
Time Orchestra Dino
Salluzzi **Scanner Sluts** N'
Strings & 909
Squarepusher Squirrel
Bait **Tomasz Stanko**
Strato-2-East Cecil Taylor
Jimi Tenor **Amon Tobin**
The Watts Prophets **Kenny**
Wheeler/Lee Konitz
Dave Holland/Bill Frisell
The Tony Williams Lifetime
Workshop Franz Zappa
Plus critical beats in brief

Graham Bowers

Transgression
RED WINE/BLVD 002 CD

I have to confess my lamentable ignorance of Bowers's previous work. (1995's *Of Many Bloods*, something that I will shortly be remedying after exposure to this enchanting release. Bowers's music oscillates between delicious abstraction and frenetically disorientating noise. Points of comparison are elusive, but the work of David Jackson or Morphogenesis are conceivably valid parallels. *Transgression* is subtitled "a conversation in music and painting." Conceptually this may be valid, but personally I don't find the accompanying paintings to be as entrancing as the music.

There seems to be something of the contemporary hermetic thinker in Bowers's vision. His music seems to have sprung fully-formed from the deepest levels of the psyche. It conjures visions of atavistic resurgence or what Arthur Schenker referred to as prehistoric revision. Truly Bowers seems to have evolved his own personal arcane and translated it into a music of terrifying beauty and potency.

Transgression seems to point towards music's pre-secular origins. Bowers's compositions possess the lyrical beauty and the inescapable mystery evident in the work of 20th century British composers Peter Warlock and John Ireland. Numerous reviewers have emphasised the supposed 'dark' nature of Bowers's work, but that wouldn't be my interpretation if it were the realm of the *Qlopki* it is because such elements need to be integrated within one's consciousness. We are certainly not taking Dark Ambient here.

In constructing his spellbinding music, Bowers utilizes conventional instrumentation in a wonderfully unconventional way. Add to the music concrete techniques and deft use of sound processing and what emerges is something very special and undeniably magical in nature. I eagerly await the next release in the series.

JOHN FRYBELL

James Carter Quartet

JC On The Set
JVCOLLEPBB-ATE 083 CD

Jazz history weighs on the brains of its musicians like a nightmare. Accounts of its ascent from street and brothel to dignity and freedom immediately become embroiled in politics. Beneath the current jazz wars, for example, lurk ferociously antagonistic assessments of the station facing black America since the setbacks of the 60s.

Unimpaired spirits react against the farcical claims for the progress, academic neo-jazz of the neo-conservatives and open their arms to free improvisation. Funk, Stockhausen, World Music, Ambient, theatre, opera, noise, pop, rock — anything but the saxophone and the ballad and the

Bloodcount

Bloodcount Unbound
SCREWJAN SCREW U 70001 3CD

It was sad to hear last year of the demise of the German JMT label, not least because it was home to the criminally underrated alto saxophonist Tim Berne. From 1988 Berne produced nine excellent CDs for JMT under his own name, with Minkature, and as leader of Cans Totale or Bloodcount. So this album, the first release on Berne's own Screwjan label, is particularly welcome.

What we have is three CDs protected by paper slips, wrapped in a raw cardboard sleeve like a *Savage Republic* release) with a handwritten insert. The recordings were made live and, the insert insists, "were not produced". And that's what makes this an interesting addition to Berne's catalogue. Although his last release was also a three CD series of Bloodcount concerts, made in Paris in 1995, they maintained the sensibility of his studio recordings. Despite being 'live' and apparently less tightly arranged, the production was relatively clean and the accent remained squarely on the nuances of Berne's compositions and quicksilver group interaction. These new discs, on the other hand, have a raw, immediate sound. Drummer Jim Black sounds as limber as Joey Baron with the potency of John Bonham, and this in turn makes the interplay between Berne and tenor saxophonist Chris Speed much more combative. Michael Formanek has to produce some tough bass work to match his mark, while the absence of guitarist Marc Ducret perhaps helped to free up the group dynamics. This is a real prizefight by Berne's standards, but the compositions lose none of their subtlety.

Two of the discs were recorded in Berlin in 1996 and



PHOTO: ANDREW POTTS/REDFERNS

feature mostly unrecorded compositions. The third, recorded in Michigan in the same year, duplicates the content of the second disc of the *Paris* set. Take the opportunity to make a real companion and you'll see that even over 40 minutes each arrangement is duplicated exactly, with solos and themes timed to the minute. The approach, however, is utterly different! The raw spontaneity of the performances betrays the discipline that marks any Berne project out as something special in new jazz.

For anyone who finds the kinetic energy of full-on sax, drums and bass irresistible, *Unbound* is a must. And if the music sometimes gets too carnivorous in its ferocity, the sleeve includes a vegan recipe.

TIM OWEN

blues. So far it seemed that only David Murray could squeeze more mileage out of acoustic interpretations of Broadway standards and Englishes. Then a saxophonist like James Carter arrives, and you realise that politics, marketing and hype have obscured the happening jazz from view.

James Carter's group plays straight-ahead jazz with a fluidity and spleen that is utterly contemporary. There is none of the stylistic straitjacket that makes Berkeley school 'bop mechanical and servile. Point! Craig Taborn can comp a ballad like "Sophisticated Lady", but he can also erupt into cascading free-fires. Carter plays a ballad worthy of Ben Webster, yet also engages in thoroughly vulgar baritone howls. He has his ensemble risk freedom assaults on the very matrix of the music. Drummer Tim Taborn and bassist Jaribu Shahid are truly astonishing — able to force the music to the edge of coherence, then snatch it back with the wise laughter that is the essence of jazz's refusal to split/join from knowledge.

A standard like "Caravan" is a genre in itself a species of rhythmic attitude when Carter's baritone broils in it, you are off in a cabaret when 50 times as physical as the "Island"

samples and asymmetrical rhythms triggered in Trance. Taborn picks up Carter's leaning invulnerability and turns it into breath-takingly broken beats.

The myths and lies and collusions of the jazz spectacle — an overwearing legacy, a frozen current practice — can lead to the conclusion that spontaneous music-making today is the province of Improv, lo-fi or rap. Suddenly James Carter is playing, and you realise that such genre-decisions answer ideology with yet more ideology. Worse, they obscure music that is alive and looking and playing and dancing. Carter has resurrected the emotional urgency that is required to play jazz at its musically zenith. Get with it.

BRK WATSON

Carl Craig

More Songs About Food And
Revolutionary Art

PLATE 1 CD

For an album whose title explicitly mentions revolutionary art this is a pretty safe affair. Echoing both the vibrant colours of Craig's insurrectionary antecedents from the Motor

Cry (MCS, P-Funk), the Diego Rivera murals at the Detroit Institute of Art, and the quirky oblique politics of the Talking Heads album that's alluded to in the title, *More Songs About Food* sounds like the reality fairer after the overthrow.

Craig is in elegiac mode here, conjuring up a field of sound swathes that are neither moody nor morose, just kind of sedated and dulled. Sure, the music's emotional, but there are no contours, the sonic vista is overwhelmingly flat — a tundra of synth washes. The album feels like a mild, mean depression where synth pads fill up the entire spectrum of sound, auditory sounds underperformed key strings and keyboard oscillators are in pacific huff.

"ES 307" and "Supina" sound like the chills, numbing, headrush sensation of being in a car while "Dreamland" is noisecore bliss. "Red Lights" has keyboardists that modulate into too little whistles. "Goodbye World" features a horseshorn and "Amen Talk" reaffirms the old adage that no one can hear you scream in space. It's not a bad album by any means, just one whose music is spiritless and deflated. Not exactly a call to arms.

PETER SHAPROD

soundcheck

minded, multi-instrumental outfit concerned to extend rock forms with occasional excursions into jazz fusion and folk. The lengthy "Nothing At All" typifies this ambitious temperament, though by later standards its folk, hard rock, frantic drumming and improv piano episodes are unevenly assembled. Likewise, the hard rock meets R&B riffing on "Why Not?" now sounds a touch heaven.

This line-up went on to create a smoother, richer electronic sound on *Aquarium Two* (1971): its eight superbly crafted compositions exhibit an astonishing range of tone-colours as conventional rock instrumentation is destructively supplemented by strings, horns, woodwinds and assorted tuned percussion. The harmonic and rhythmic complexity of this classical chamber ensemble, achieved without a whiff of self-styled pomp, "Edge Of Twilight", with its exquisite punalimbic textures, treated vocals and delicate references to Bartók's *Son Intérieur*, is one of the highlights. "Black Cat" favours a satably tight, lagoon-like structure for multitracked strings with moody jazz overtones, while the evocative maritime chorus of "Inebri" is interspersed with Renaissance-style lute-like acoustic, resonant, harpsichord. Finally, instrumental technique as well it should be – at the service of the music.

Occipus, the group's fourth album, came out in early 1973. The sleeve design, one of Roger Dean's more memorable flights of fancy, goes uncredited here. (Then regarded as the best Giant album to beg to differ.) It's a strong collection of intricate songs with one instrumental: the nippy "The Boys in the Band," bursting with jazz-rock quirkiness. Minnow's aristocratic interest in medieval and Renaissance forms is to the fore on "Raconteur," "Troubadour," and more spangly apparent on "Let's Dig Up With Kindness," one of their loveliest melodies and an archaic read on organ adds to the whimsical mood of "Dance Life," the group's maturest and most raucous. Discarded as a latter-day bad pop, "Knott" features some beautifully arranged a capella vocal parts, a recurring pleasure in Giant's oeuvre which they successfully recreated live.

The sticker adorning the Edge of Twilight compiler announces that it contains "many tracks previously unavailable on CD." Wrong. Everything here has already been released, and the claim that the album represents "The Best Of George Gwin" is ludicrous. The 31 tracks are selected from George Gwin, *Acquiring Two Ties: Three Finales* (1972), *Citiguns and The Power And The Glory* (1973-74) — the first half of the group's career minus *In A Glass House* (1976). Arguably more innovative and influential than subsequent albums, which saw a disappointing drift towards attempted commercial accessibility (though *Intensive* is still sadly underrated), the collection of material presented here is a true value-for-money introduction. More than 20 years after the fact, this music's compositional maturity now rings clear. Check out one of the most inventive British acts of the 70s.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Trilok Gurtu

The Glimpse
029 84 00

Sorry to be an old stick-in-the-mud, but I reckon Trinko Gards's 1996 live jam *Boo! Habes De Hart* to be not only one of his best, but one of the best fusion albums for many years. Macho posturing, sure, but also delightfully musical. It begged the question, however, as to whether the percussionist might trap himself in the music spotlight and start going all Tribal Tech. Fusion might sound exhilarating enough for one album, but there's few other styles that fit musicians with such weighty concrete overtones.

Not for nothing, though, do good folk like John McLaughlin give Gurtu a free rein in their music, and here he justifies that musically trust. This is what Black Planet-era Weather Report might have sounded like had they not discovered the wonders of modern technology. Gurtu's Crazy Saints group suffered from just that isen-her-and-isen-good attitude. But on *The Glimpse*, which is almost exclusively played on acoustic instruments, a bottleneck slide sounding like a

Agua Fria is never there to elicit a show, they won't exclaim, neither is the faultless elation of bluesgrass. North Indian and European harmonies on Orestes Cosenza's "Low Town" here given a resonant, almost religious reading. The album's dedicated to the memory of Don Cherry, and the opening "Cherry Town" certainly lets the old maestro know that great minds are not wonting of him. Soaring, pulsating, and full of jells, all fragments and fragments of sound from their sources, a gradually resolves into a boisterous swinging blue. There are, of course, longways lost to vacant for freebreathing solos — for Guntis' own explosive villas of folk and runs, but the new inevitable "mouth music" polyrhythms, but also for painted Andy Erler, whose range ramp chords on "Cherry Town" compellingly transfer the mood of the piece, and for trumpeter Paolo Fusco. A little more of the latter would have been good as the real star of a live-set show. One of the most interesting musicians currently working, and on the top of his form.

PAUL STUMP

Charlie Haden & Pat Metheny

Beyond The Missouri Sky
www.517.130.02

wanted to let this album and rather expected to hate it, repeated exposure has led to neither. Instead I've found myself simply admiring it, and somehow that seems worse. Hazen and McPherson's association goes back a long way, a rather rusty 18-year old McPherson apparently introduced himself to Hazen at an Gemette Coleman show in 1973, and since 1980. There's a little doubt that Hazen brings out the best in the younger player, the bassist appears on what for me remain the juiciest of their albums, 8031 and *Blindling*. I recorded what was with Eric S. Satter, Short Story, and Hazen's first album, the first release as a duo, and seems — at its best, an attempt to capture in music some of the ambience of the well-used Missouri countryside where they both grew up.

The choice of material is certainly spot on in rescuing a few lost American Songbook nuggets from obscurity. Among originals but for musicians (including a couple of absolute gems by Haden) most especially his "Spanish Love Song," every nuance of its melody tumbled inside out here by the guitarist's wit as come across the legendary Jim Webb's "The Moon Is a Hard Thing," Johnny Mandel's "Moon Song," Henry Mancini's "Two for the Road." Mancini's main theme from "Cinema Paradiso" now over-exposed I fear but given fresh life here! and — for my money the finest piece on the album — "Sorrider," written by Haden's son, Josh, for his wonderful but much overlooked group Spain.

Naturally the music is flawlessly performed, and with absolute commitment to each song's individual aura, and while both musicians are adroit performers, here as elsewhere, neither is at pains to show it off (though generally pigeonholed as a fusion player, Metheny has somehow always avoided the form's tendency to grandstand). And yet, this music feels some fundamental equity. I'm not sure if there's too much mutual respect, or that the material — as equitably chosen as it is — crucially avoids the kind of angular, obtuse meanderings which have, in the past, brought out the best in both, but surely Missouri has some bad weather or some ugly towns, too.

SAMMIE HOPKINS

Pierre Henry

Messe Pour Le Temps Présent
PHILIPS 456 293 CD

Métamorphose

Messe Pour Le Temps Présent
 9780566294002

30 years on, Pierre Henry's seminal *Messe Pour Le Temps Présent* still sounds incredibly modern. A pioneer of *musique concrète*, Henry composed the piece in 1967 for a ballet by Maurice Béjart. It consists of 12 minutes of music divided up into sections — the famous electronic 'jinks' Michel Colombier, ancestor of some of Serge



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richard glaze, jamie male, david cunniff
Benson Music (see above record label)



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Gunsbourg's greatest hits, composed the instrumental contributors, which Henry blended with a variety of carefully prepared electronic sounds. It was the first time that crude and flashy electronic effects had been put to such striking use in popular music. These disarmingly simple compositions based on the jerk were fleshed out with impressive stereophonic effects, and "Psyche Rock" in particular kept to prove an immediate and enduring hit.

The jerks were also an attempt to recreate the atmosphere of certain American films and Henry's skill at creating powerful, evocative images is even more apparent in *Le Voyage*, an electroacoustic work composed in 1952 which is also featured on this CD. *Le Voyage* deals with the theme of death and conjures up ghostly, oppressive ambiances to brilliant effect. Only occasionally do its outlandish gurgles and fearful hums and groans sound naive or dated, but this naivety undoubtedly contributes to its charm. Only the last piece on the record, *Vibrations Pour Une Porte Et Un Sauter*, fails to fit the tape in time. Here, a crackling door and a sigh provide the raw material for a 16 minute work, but the end result is too crude and austere to hold the modern-day listener's attention for long.

Pierre Henry's music is a distinctly not standard item, but, which makes the Metamorphosis project something of a landmark, albeit a disappointing one. It contains new mixes of *Pierre-Henri Le Temps Présent* by an impressive roster of names, ranging from Funky Porcupine to Goldcut and William Orbit, as well as prominent members of the new wave of French producers, such as Dimitri From Paris and St Germain. Unfortunately, the end result isn't always convincing, for the most part the original jerks sit unobscured and pounding beneath beats and predictable electronic effects.

Paradoxically, these jerky tunes from the 60s are best known by the futuristic "quirkiness of drum 'n' bass, which gives them a whole new dimension. Tek 9's cold and abrasive mix is far and away the best track on the album, while Funky Porcupine injects frothy romantic touches into "Jealousy," and French duo Grib-Gri and I Cubie, operating under the name Chakoua Flight, produce a spacier reworking of "Too Tooted." Overall though, the versions fail to improve on the originals, which just goes to show that the art of remodelling isn't the universal antidote that it's often made out to be.

RAMPA KHAZARI

Latéef & Lyrics Born

Solo: The Album
SOLIS/UMH/SLSCD CDLP

As a native New Yorker it hurts me to have to admit that the San Francisco Bay Area is probably the most creative locale in HipHop right now. While Fresno has been HipHop's third city for going on a decade, it used to be

shysters like MC Hammer and Too Short that defined the city's sound with occasional shining moments from the likes of Digital Underground, The Coup and Pans. These days, though, it's the vanguard of DJ Shadow, The Invisible Scratch Records, Automator, Blackalicious and ex-pat New Yorker Dr Octagon that are earning props for Northern California. Part of the SoCalists' cover (with Shadow and Blackalicious) from Davis, Lyrics are the literal ambassadors of the Bay City's less-hardcore, more open (both in its inclusivity and azer grooves) brand of HipHop.

Rappers Lyrics Born and Latéef (both have tangential, angular, broken flows which at times border on a kind of plain-speech rimes (particularly Lyrics), who sounds smiler to New Kingdom's Sebastian Lawd Lyrics Born can take the alternative funniness a bit too far, as when he ventures into Carly Simon territory on the disorienting "Lyrics" "You get your steak and eggs/You caress myrogym?" But just as you're about to dismiss him as another MC 900 Foot Jesus, he comes out with lines like "I didn't even speak a handful and I encoached on your territory/You need therapy there MC Phanser," and "Sucker steer color of me like ferns too co-panels." Latéef, meanwhile, showcases his often changing rhythmic, verbal trickery on "The Quickeners," where his tongue-twists his way through a passage that has three internal rhymes per line. "The Quickeners" also features a great reverse bastille courtesy of DJ Shadow, who produces two other tracks plus a scratchy melodic interlude. Shadow's tracks are the best on the record — they're the most original and most detailed — but Blackalicious' Chief Xcel and Lyrics Born contribute some nice grooves. There's also a live track from 1994 that features an unfortunately exuberant John Tichau, but they get points for knowing the right people. These days, when that seems to be the only qualification for fame, it's refreshing to discover people who are taking up their connections with their talent.

PETER SNAPE

Morphogenesis

Charnivm Music
MORPHOGENESIS/RO CD CD

Michael Prime

Cellular Rader
MYCOPHILE/SPOR CD CD

Organum

Kammer
ACROPLANE 25 CD

British improving group Morphogenesis was formed in 1985. Co-founder Roger Sutherland was a member of the late 60s Scratch Orchestra and he describes its "democratic idealism" as an important influence. "We willingness to embrace any combination of circumstances — social and

environmental — as valid influences on the music's formation." We regard each performance as the unique and unrepeatable expression of the acoustic and social ecology of a given time and place." This philosophy manifests itself in *Charnivm Music*, which eschews the usual gestural features of free improvisation — that sense of an interpersonal drama shaping the sounds, determining the direction of a piece. Morphogenesis's music retains an almost impersonal quality where live electronics, percussion and found objects junk conspire to conceal the feeling that these soundscapes are the product of human agency. Aesthetic attention is camouflaged in the multilayered sounds which assume an environmental stature (more so than in the current AHM) to where the gestures of individuals are still identifiable, as the pieces seem to take on a life of their own with undisturbed static drones sometimes underpinning the linear drift of electronic tones, radio fragments and the austere textures of amplified objects. Elusive, yet strangely captivating work.

Michael Prime is part of Morphogenesis and also a former member of The Scratch Orchestra. His solo work is directed towards what he calls "a new ecology of sound." He records urban and rural environmental sounds, often those not ordinarily available, and radically transforms them through electronic processing. Against the improvised, organic flow of *Charnivm Music*, the studio manipulations on *Cellular Rader* sound rather cold and contrived. The two 20 minute pieces are twisting, their episodic structure channelled into a clearer pattern of version and release than present in Morphogenesis, the cumulative effect is a lot less engaging and without the group's satisfying sense of mystery and spatial stability.

These features, however, play a central role in David Jackson's distinctive soundtrack *Jackson* (aka Organum) is yet another former Scratch Orchestra member and is keen to "create something really organic, like something from the very beginnings of music making." His improvisations, often recorded in the studio, are highly more in their use of slowly shifting, primordial drones which bring an element of serenity to an otherwise severe, mainly percussive environment. Jackson is superb at creating the illusion of a three-dimensional sonic architecture; here on *Kammer*, a 17 minute, one track EP with Emma O' Biong and Michael Prime, there's a strong sense of the subterranean — like the echoc naming and grinding of heavy machinery heard through concrete walls. Vivid

CHRIS BLACKFOOT

Lee Perry

Arilology
ISLAND JAPANESE CTRCD CD

As surprising as the Pope Blessing a condom, Lee Perry's reconciliation with Island means

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Can
Sacrilege

HUTE SPIDON (SONO) 35940 20203P

Straight away this Can remix project attacks out of defence with a title that trips up the most obvious charge of over-protective pants.

Instigated by Hute's founder Daniel Miller, himself a long-time Can fan, with the enthusiastic approval (and, more importantly, the generous non-interference) of the group themselves, *Sacrilege* also denies casual thrill-seekers the freedom of hearing scummy art vandals daisies dubbing the avant equivalent of moustache and specs onto the *Moro Leo*. Yet, just as official biographies scarcely guarantee you getting intimate with their subjects, the aura of approval surrounding *Sacrilege* doesn't automatically produce stimulating results. Though Can themselves argue that the original tracks were not so much complete but works in progress, the raw stuff of music there to be re-edited and remoulded ad infinitum, the two-track tapes onto which they were improvised hardly permit re- and de-mixers from taking the music apart and reconstructing it anew. For those invited to give this material 90s makeover, its living legacy is sliney skips of sound that won't stay dead. These can be sliced and spliced into new twitching rhythm tracks, freeze-dried and shattered into a million molecules of sound — each one ingrained with the pattern of the whole — or pulverised beyond recognition. The most exhilarating *Sacrilege* material follows one or other of these methods: A Guy Called Gerald's "Tango Whiskeyman" is a tremendous northern trip through the mean streets of a blasted urban Britain, but I think Imrn Schmidt's hearing things when he implied (in *The Wire* 158) that he could hear Can's ghost haunting it. Starting from a similar place, the Hillel Kasper/Lada team reouches "Unlashed" on a drum 'n' bass pattern, but in the process retains more of the original. On first encounter Bruce Gilbert's "TV Spot" seems to be an utterly pointless exercise in noise obliteration yet its pulsating black hole energy exerts a gravitational pull all its own. And the Sonic Youth/Hunter Thiers take on "Spoon" is as deft and dais as Ciccone Youth's "Two Rock

Chicks," a dissertation on *Neuf*.

Gerald aside, these examples come from the avantist rock tradition established by Can. They're immensely appealing and undeniably adventurous, but — paradoxically — they're not entirely unredemptible. It's down to the dance fraternity to give the project a 90s gloss, whatever that's worth. Again, Can's originals are pre-emptive. Regardless of their backgrounds in contemporary composition and modern jazz, Can's instrumentalists directed the massive forces their improvisations unleashed towards a new simplicity. In this they were led by drummer Jaki Liebovitz's ambition to reduce Can's music to a single racing pulse. Their layering of textures on heartbeat drumming was in essence *Electronica* avant la technology. The challenge their music poses to dance removers is to construct something from their simplicity without either betraying it by interweaving the original into a needlessly complex new framework or jumbling it down by storming the rippling floor of Can's beautiful beats by snipping and mechanically looping rhythms and egotistically dabbling the DJ's signature on it. For instance, Secret Knowledge's "On Yeah" retains enough of the original to exert a superficial attraction, but it is marred by the banal looped vocal refrain. On the other hand, the rolling monumentalism of "Hidukawah" is made even more deliciously precarious in the way The Orb periodically pull the rhythm up short and threaten to topple it. Datto UNKLE's "Maurin C" Taking on the later "Flow Motion", Air L'Esprit do excellent work in retroactively improving the blood circulation of a track produced long after the group's first flush, when they'd grown too tired to smoothly push the pulse through the music's clogging veins. The other successful revelation of a late work's true content is Westbeat's march-of-the-munchkins makeover of "And More". But the best of the dance reorientations is Carl Craig's "Future Days", which eerily relocates Can's future vision in a sinister post-apocalyptic Detroit technoscape of gleaming skyscrapers rising out of urban ruin. Here Imrn Schmidt's suggestion (in *The Wire* 158 again) that Can's music might serve the future in the same way as the ruins of antiquity serve the present is most daisly realised.

BIBA KOPF

that he'll be able to profit from this triple CD trail through his association with the label between 1975-79. But the collection is a good deal more than a pension scheme, of course. A nicely annotated and thorough compilation, it strikes a good balance between the more familiar material and unreleased tracks and alternate mixes. Some of Perry's best work was recorded for Island, but also some of his most conventional material like George Fathi's "To Be A Lover" and the Heston's "Hake Up Your Mind" is the soulful stuff, but it hardly bears out Perry's reputation for studio alchemy. If it isn't quite wall-to-wall genius, the compilation is liberally strewn with extraordinary music: it opens, for example, with the marvelous "Dub Revolution" (from the classic *Revolution Dub*, one of the most extreme expressions of the Perry vision) "Congorian" from *Heart Of The Congo* is here, as are the delectably atmospheric "Vibrate On" with Augustus Pablo. Some of the strongest material involves Junior Munde's "Police And Thieves" still has an unearthly charm, and it's alongside Jah Lion's toast to the out, a dub, a Sashagun version and "Bad Weed", an alternative Munde vocal over the same track. Less well known are "Closer Together" and the stunning "Roots Train". The latter has Munde cruising with the assurance of Curtis Mayfield over brilliantly named bassing vocals, and it's followed by a fine Dillinger track. There are several cuts (though sadly not the boogie "Smookey Rooster") from Max Romeo's *War In A Babylon*, one of the most polished productions to come out of the Black Ark. With strong songs, the album deserved the relatively high sales it achieved, though it can't hold a candle to the murky genius of Black Ark masterpieces like *Cry Too Hot* or *Open the Gate* (available on Trojan).

Perry's influence on 90s music has been the subject of much comment. It wasn't just the virtuosic use of basic audio equipment he had an imagination in those years that could transform the feeble musical moment, with the listener dropping out of the present into another dimension. Such moments as the rhythmic gear-shift at the beginning of "Police And Thieves", and the eerie cut midway through "Rast Fish And Cornbread" are blinding transformations. But the flood of Perry's rites of audio necromancy is also present here. "The deivs in the hills are laughing, while the children in the ghetto are starving," sing The Meditations. Cut after cut, the stretches of otherworldly matter frame despairing social commentary. Perry wasn't alone in believing the sufferance of 70s Jamaica, of course, but the intensity of the urge to transform the here-and-now in the studio adds a potent and useful melancholy to these songs. If it can't sustain a "Best of tag over the duration of three CDs, there's some great Perry work here at least, and a good deal of material that's worth hearing besides.

WILL MONTGOMERY

The Pharaohs

Awakening
LUVIN' MIGHT LP020 CD/SP

The Pharaohs

In The Basement
LUVIN' MIGHT LP020 CD/SP

The Pharaohs are legendary if you believe people who tell things like "this band is legendary." Coming out of both the blues and Afrocentric jazz scenes on Chicago's South Side, some Pharaohs were former Chess session musicians and some went on to help Placenta White form Earth, Wind And Fire's horn section. Recently reunited, they made their only official album, *Awakening*, in 1970 and issued it on their own label, Scarus. *Awakening* doesn't get into much Sun Ra territory, despite what the language on the back cover might lead you to believe ("listen to the simultaneous dimensions of time"), and the fact they were part of something called the *Also Afro Theater*. No matter — there may be more fucked-up, electro-spastic, astro jazz outtakes out there, but few are this full of good cheer and musicality. The first track, "Damballa," is stellar. With just a latinate cowbell pattern a chant ("Damballa") and two chords, everyone has what they need to play their asses off. The resulting rave-up comes complete with mild punning effects, a froaky vocal breakdown and a wonderful landing of sticks between trombone and guitar. "Ibo" is an all-percussion chant (like a lyric, again) with actual focus and real propulsion. Skipping quickly the misquaged cover of "Tracks Of My Tears," "Black Earth" is pure Kool & The Gang funk. "I want some of that old Grandio stuff" someone cries, and everyone convulses with the group going on to provide details you don't normally get in early 1970s ghettofunk funk. The real payoff is "Grand House," which makes good on the promise of "Damballa."

Opening with a solo electric bass improv (the lord you hope for not [aren't get] rhythms and harmony come from all corners and a vamp begins that has room for a mosey-to-like wah-wah guitar solo, a few-fingering rids cymbal, growling in tongues, and a Reel-like give and take between the horns, a hypnotized straddles the ideas like pancakes and manages to leave room for a keening melody.

In *The Basement* is the kind of collection of live tracks, outtakes, B-sides, etc., that any group with such a limited official issue almost requires. It's as good as leftovers get, with the three live recordings standing out, and reminding that The Pharaohs, by on compositions, had no trouble burning together without destroying the rhythmic foundation, making them perfect candidates for the *Never Quite Happened* jazz funk discovover (at least not the jazz funk). Their cover of the Thom Bell soul staple "People Make The World Go Round" begins in nicely twisted territory — starkly reads swarming over an electric bass ostinato — but is undone by a rote vocal performance courtesy of guest Sue Cowley. "Africa"

Roots" and "The Pharaohs Love Y'all" are pretty much what their titles suggest, the latter winning on bounce, the former collapsing under its earnest lyric. "Drum Suite" is what you call a drum jam when it's good, and this one is, quite. The cover of "Love And Happiness" is better than the Smokey where but puzzling why would such a hairy and multiplexed unit want to emulate one of the world's most compressed, unworld group pieces.

SASHA FRIED JONES

George Russell Living Time Orchestra

It's About Time
LUBIN' BLU LP010 CD/SP

One could complain that, for such a major jazz composer, George Russell hasn't actually done as much that much. After the highly rich and diverse music of his Jazz Workshop and Riverside albums, the last 30 years have seen him apparently circling around and back through the same handful of "big" conceptual pieces — much as Bill Evans seemed content enough to tinker with the levels and degrees of light in his actually quite small oeuvre. This time, George has gone back to 1972's *Living Time*, originally done as a sort of concerto for Bill Evans, here redistributed through a number of voices in the latest Russell orchestra. The eight "events" in the work often revolve around riffs cleverly passed through the constituent parts of the orchestra, with solos or rhythm section conversing with the structure. Paul-Christen Saccu does a decent job in the Evans role — actually, his introduction to the final episode is one of the most engaging parts of the music — and the basic Russell group, with British stalwarts like Andy Sheppard, Chris Biscoe, Steve Loder and Richard Henry, is as good as any Orchestra he's directed in the past two decades. A two-part piece called "It's About Time" (seems like George is getting a bit stuck for titles these days, too) acts as a prelude to the main work, and it's another reliably solid chunk of Russell, with Sheppard and Stanton Davis turning in the best solos.

Sold? Debatable? This might not be what we want from an iconoclast in his prime. Indeed, Russell's music has settled into what's become familiar jazz currency: funk-like rhythms, big splashy colours, meaty solos, a well-rounded palette. You'll enjoy this record, but whether you'll want (let alone need) to hear it often, I doubt.

RICHARD COOKE

Scanner

Delivery
BAMOE P05H 114 CD

Robin Renaud's Scanner project has recently been the target of criticism in certain quarters, the implication being that the use of scans is a gimmick, and it's his music that Renaud should be judged. Leaving aside the fact that I

would consider the use of scans a legitimate modus operandi, Renaud should silence these critics with *Delivery*, as musically it is his most fully realised work.

Combining influences from dub, Trip-hop, Techno, etc., Renaud weaves a fascinating and utterly absorbing tapestry of sound. "Teenie Sport" seduces with its enchanting minimalism and haunting melodies. "Fingerb" demonstrates his penchant for inspired quirkiness and compares with Mike Paradinas's best work. Quirky Scanner metamorphoses into Scary Scanner with the disquieting "Held", its tenebrous atmospheres perfectly complement the obsessive and disturbing scanned message.

One is ineluctable drawn to the conclusion that there has been a significant progression in terms of the purely musical element of Scanner's work. Previous releases may have been more reliant on the actual scans to create the focus of interest, but *Delivery* gets the balance right. Renaud has now developed his own ingenious musical vocabulary, the scans and the music assume equal importance and, consequently, engender greater cogency within the work.

JOHN EVERALL

Sluts 'N' Strings & 909

Carrottop
CHEAP CHEAP LP010 CD/SP

Mäuse

Teens Root Gumbler-Struckture
MOOSE PRODUCTIONS CD/SP

Yet more screedball Electro-concoctures from Vienna courtesy of Patrick Pulsinger and his harem of slappy sidekicks. *Sluts 'N' Strings* is Pulsinger and Edem Tursunak at their silliest and funkiest. Mäuse, meanwhile, is an utterly bizarre duo of frequent Pulsinger collaborator Gerhard Polzinski and Tim Rübnerwerk (the best name in contemporary music?).

OK, so maybe naming an album after a Porsche isn't the most auspicious beginning in the world, but when the music is this much fun I'll forgive them anything. Carrottop starts with the Electro-phunk of "Intro (Go Back In Time With Your Mind)" and continues in that vein almost straight through with the exceptions of the more punk Techno of "Civilized", the down-tempo beats of "Dig This?" and the smooth Techno-fusion of "Hard Move". Along the way there's loads of goodness: the record company plug in the middle of "It's A Blast", complete with a warning to blaggies ("there's no means [sic]"), "Phut's" Sessily rap rap, and the loopy bling of the live jam section, "Crunchy Custard".

Sluts 'N' Strings are Kullwerk with Jafra, impractical ball, hair, swinging medallions and comic timing. Mäuse marmite Polzinski had some input on Carrottop, a pretty great given some on "Put Me On?" and a surreal monologue on "Past the Gates", but he saves the real performance for Teens Root Gumbler-Struckture. For starters,

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the album cover

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Thomas Köner

Porter Ricks

Bohmetics

CHAIN REACTION CDR 91 CD

Porter Ricks
Redundance Vols. 1 & 2

HAIRGLASS INC. 1197 21 2012

Under his own name, Thomas Köner makes music that barely moves or changes. With Andy Mielig, as Porter Ricks, he brings in more evidence of human existence. *Bohmetics* collects all of their 12" output for the Chain Reaction imprint, an offshoot of Berlin's Basic Channel label, plus a bit more, the kinetics are most likely waves, the bio is probably the ocean, and if anybody was about to miss that there are some titles "Nautical Zone," "Nautical Nüba," "Port Of Call."

Music like this seems to be called Techno, or abstract Techno, because it's made with machines, heeds mostly to 4/4 time and is said in certain shops. Beyond that, there's little to link it to club culture or sonic. It's non-aggressive,

not exactly hedonistic, and rarely provides motifs to hang on to. But in its own shy way, there's more humanity in these aggregations than in the cybernump of Gebba or Techstep or other such lively genres. Which is not to draw the pleasure boundaries, as this won't ever have me slamming around the room like "Mothership," but blimps of breakbeats flung against my brain has never made me feel sad or churchy, and Porter Ricks already has.

Someone will soon give this kind of music a name like "Oscilloscope Techno" or "Minimalist waveform dub," but in the meantime, you can look for this filed in next to Panatomic, Bernard Günter, as well as other Basic Channel reissues. Porter Ricks make music from clicks and thumps, essentially small sounds, the noise left over when they've taken all the music away. The Porter Ricks take on the click is to drag it through analogue mud and break the dialectic of organic and inorganic with the result. Sounds made on electrical circuits sound like kisses, lipsmacks, wooden tables bumping, oceans shifting, puddles lapping against basin rims.

Porter Ricks favours, as do their European peers, the Duchamp trick of passing two patterns over each other, creating more spirals of related, interacting beats that never settle. From there, everyone chooses their own textures and Porter Ricks forgo the Geger counter for a softer, nautical sound. "Nautical Dub" is oceanic all right, like a field recording of a whale's heartbeat made with contact mics. "Port Geralt" sounds like a shark patrolling the waters for the downbeat, while time shifts slowly in the undertow. "Port Of Call" is the sound of a submarine surfacing, looking perhaps for a place to dock. Like a tight-lipped phone partner, the endless horizons and limited sounds of this music span you to fill the space with analogies, myths, images.

Compared to Bohmetics, the two *Redundance* 12"s are positively party music, since most tracks feature an identifiable four-on-the-floor pulse and something like a bassline. "1" sets the stage with pronounced rhythms but "1 Version" retreats to Bohmetics territory and highlights the edges of aerial waves with fluorescent static. "Redundance 3" is a Xenox of Electro beneath a puddle of solvent. "Redundance 6" finds new ground, imbruing a soft lull drum to a squelchy harmonica-like loop that is playing the Bo Diddley rhythm. It's a beautiful little sandwich of rhythmic DNA, snare bumping in the night and dodging, wordlessly.

SASHA FRERE JONES

phunkdelectations, the phen-juno Julio Baslino of "Ratic River," the waltz-whirl mayhem of "Cooper's World," industrialisms giving way to a crackling sampling break-fest on "Fat Controller."

Even when Jenkinson explores the dark side as he does on "Crim Hoopy" (which sounds like his take on Techstep, is, a recording of a 40 car pile-up played back at 78 rpm), the beat sensationalism ensures that the lefts continue unabated. In spite of the euphoric anxiety implied by the norm of chaos, Jenkinson's trademark light-speed drum breaks are hilarious. They're like the over-the-top sound effects in a mid-70s kung fu flick, the implausible velocity of the snare's is musical: a version of the cyclone generated by Lo Lish chopping the air in *Five Fingers Of Death*. There are a couple of lapses of judgment like "Papalon" where Jenkinson believes he's on stage with Return To Forever, but any album that fantasizes about Jac Pastorius reborn with the hair of Ron O'Neal, the humour of Antonio Fargas and the chops of a Roland 303 is worth celebrating.

PETER SHAPIRO

Squirrel Bait

Squirrel Bait

REPTILES CREAMING CITY 06X 110X 103 CDR

Squirrel Bait

Slog Tenetm

REPTILES CREAMING CITY 06X 110X 103 CDR

In the 1980s, Louisville, Kentucky produced a group of musicians who have ended up making considerable impact on independent rock in America. Most of them were in Squirrel Bait or in the groups that followed in the wake of their demise. After Bait's short career (from 1983-86), underground Brian McFadden went on to Salt and The For Carnation, drummer Britt Walford went on to Sins and Evergreen, while bassist Clark Johnson and guitarist David Grubbs moved on to Ikaro and Gaze Del Sol, with Grubbs doing various other recordings and starting the Dinosaur Cage revival label with Gaze Del Sol partner Jim O'Rourke.

Punk, the "historical accident," happened only once and it's been well-documented elsewhere what that misadventure was and wasn't. For Bait and musicians like him, coming after the Holy Wars of 1976, punk, "the alternative," was as much an idea as it was a music. Squirrel Bait, along with Big Bad and Sonic Youth, represented an important transitional movement in the history of that idea. Summed up, it was that the rigour and fury of punk could lose its literal rappings of bar chords, lyrics designed to piss somebody off and short songs and become a spiritual or ideological force that could be imported into whatever music you felt like making. In the US it's the subject of endless and generally over-determined debate as to whether the spirit of punk

there's a reference to Shewadwyd on the disc itself which is followed up by name-checks for Ted For The Tillerian and Yessongs in the lyric sheet. Then there are some stunning liner notes "Der Brummerbar" ("The Bear") is about people who are so lonely that they sit in their pants in order to meet someone they can blame. "The music is a full exhalation of their machines' toxic palates, the album ranges from the Teutonic Electronic of "Der Brummerbar" through the mellow keyboards of "Die Pierschen" to the industrial Techno of "Hosen Rumer, Amerika" ("Hose Trainers America"). Also featured are the lagg-with-rides strut of "Biba Kaul für Ein Es," and a tune that sounds as though it was

recorded on a Walkman in the bar of a cheap tourist hotel in St. George's. My German is non-existent so I can't verify any of the liner notes' claims regarding the lyrics, but I can tell you that Mouse sound like mid-80s synth-pop recorded by anti-social guys hip to the Helens.

PETER SHAPIRO

Squarepusher
Hoard Normal Daddy

WARP WARP 05X CDR

While the term "jazz" becomes ever more meaningless in dance music circles, and nu

beatniks ever more complacent and boring, this is an album of Jason Roismann that you can believe in. "Squarepusher" picks up where last year's *Faced Mc World* things left off by recasting Billie Holiday as an apocalyptic snare-roll machine and imagining what a hardcore DJ like Sliem might have sounded like mixing it up with Jan Hammer. In other words, dream '91 bass of the absurd.

Despite the obvious craftsmanship of *Hoard Normal Daddy*, it's hard to take it seriously. Hidden inside its Springsteenian title is a portrayal of the smart-yp gearhead as "average disco gothboy." Squarepusher (aka Tom Jenkinson) has filed the record to lunka punk with heavily stopped Electro

inherited in any of what followed, but for many of us, the Beat were one of the bands that set it free, no matter where you think it went after that.

Transcends aside, what Squirrel Bait played was still more punk than not punk. These are loud pop songs in the process of unleashing themselves into a different sound. Hyperactive live, the teen-teenaged Beat made two records in 1985 and 1986 that took the Husker Du model of emotionally messy, overdriven punk-pop and pushed it, if not out the window then at least down the stairs. David Grubbs's lyrics are half-failed poetry, half-good shouters ("I don't need no pig stamping on my butt" from "Kid Dynamo" still works well), and as sung by the vaguely shrewish Peter Searcy, they alternate between the thrilling and the oddly over-dramatic. Searcy yelled, at least, and kept up with the group, which seemed to surprise itself every second. "Oh my, he's playing a different chord, this song is Oh my. For god's sake! Oh my, this song is fast! Taking punk's inherent speed as a starting point but not as a prescription. Belted expanded neo-noise into cathartic formalism, packing songs with weird chords and unapologetically furious drumming. Britt Wolford, who played only on the first album, had a fierce and clean style that he paid for on the subsequent SST records, where his hanging, sliding and exploding hits formed a concrete, physical link between rock and jazz. At the time, only Ted Epiot of Blind Ideo God was chasing anything similar in its roughness and expansiveness, but since then, that charged hybrid style has seeped permanently into the water table of American independent rock drumming (cf. Tortoise, Don Caballero, Rocin, Tractor Hugs, etc.). Ben Daughtrey, who played on part of the first record and all of *Sky Heaven*, was the more energetic and polyrhythmic of the two. His playing on *Sky Heaven* is nothing short of remarkable — erratic, but emotionally driven. Hundreds of drummers prodded up their ears at the time and thought "Fuck, I don't know I could do that" as they heard Daughtrey's scuzzlike Tony Williams through Bad Brains on the intro of "Choose Ya Poison." These two drummers, more maybe than the group itself, made clear that American post-punk music was going to be about more than just extending the furies of hardcore — punk was going to be discovered in every last nook and cranny of American music, so help us God.

SASHA FRIEDRICH JONES

Jimi Tenor

Intervention
WASP 414P 414 (CD)

Warp is just the right label for me like this slowed, off-center and endearing work. Jimi Tenor thrives mischievously from all corners of Anglo-American pop and jazz with a true postmodernist's disregard for

conventional versions of aesthetic hierarchies ("Outa Space" is a swirling Joe Meek fantasy lettered out with a Booby Collins bassline, "Down Town" is John Coltrane's Afrodisiac rearranged by Luis Schtrouf, "Sugar Daddy" takes a gloriously dirty Godicke-sized Gary Gather r'n'r and welds it to a starter-kit Pet Shop Boys lyric about male prostitution — and that's just the first three tracks).

It's all so promiscuous it leaves you dizzy, but as the album unfolds after that striking trio, recurring devices slot into place. One is a fascination with the *axial* sleeve of film noir and top show soundtracks that edges worryingly close to 70s loungecore kitsch, while the second, which might just about redeem the first, is a fondness for my musical jokes. "Caravan" for example, is the Duke Ellington time tapped out on a holiday-came organ and stretched saxopiously over a babble of jittery 1940s percussion, while "Never Say It About" offers a saxophone melody so idiosyncratically engorged with wackiness — and wackiness is clearly what it could well pass for mood music in a Crooklyn singles bar.

Quite how the reckless command of multiple drums was achieved by a Finnish multi-instrumentalist who looks like Joe 90 is anyone's guess, but there's no denying the cheerleader-like veracity at work here. The downside of so much knee-bopping is that any sense of Tenor's real comments or motivations is impossible to ascertain. Perhaps that's an old-fashioned thing to look for, but it's what distinguishes a performer with something to say from a fabulously clever human jukebox, and its absence leaves a kind of hollowiness at the core of the record. But that's a critic's after-the-event reflection — in terms of immediate surface delights this array of goody spools is one of the most entertaining records of recent times.

ANDY FIEDHURST

Amon Tobin

Bracollage
Wrasp June 2005 (CD)

Amon Tobin's previous recordings as Cap were as predictable as a Stephen King novel. Without an obvious sense of humour, there's only so far you can go with tag, labious beats and some atmospheric samples. Under his own name, however, he has managed to create some variations on the blunked beat theme by, of all things, delving deep into his jazz collection. Of course, this move succeeds because his idea of jazz has nothing to do with the sax solo on Grover Washington Jr.'s "Mr. Pigeon."

Where Squarepusher's neo-funk works by making fun of its pretensions to music virtuosity, Tobin stuffs Lionel Hampton, Art Blakey and Charles Mingus into a compression chamber and sucks the air out of their music, leaving only a hint of timbre to colour a vein, but effective breakbeat collage. Most of the drums sound like they've been lifted from bebop records, and in this environment of



harmonia mundi



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soundcheck

stoner funk their soulful textures allow. Brocage to transcend the mediocrity of aural wallpaper. "Stoney Street" starts things off with a lively and familiar acoustic bassline and strings out of Mantovani, replicating the accidental music from some sexual intrigue film set in swinging London. Side-sleeping the "Michael Caine and dolly bird in a sports car" revival of acts like Chris Evans and the Gallagher brothers. "Stoney Street" works in spite of its context and sets the tone for an album which deliberately misuses its sources.

That Polyreson tile slide guitar sound which creeps up everywhere these days roars its cheesy head on "Yasawee" as a double to a soothing synth riff, lending the track a soothing vice — like low tide on the Nya Pak coast. "Chomo Samba" uses a killer bloco Afro groove that blows away those sneaky jazz bossa nova numbers that jazz funk DJs throw in their sets in a vain attempt to inject a carnival atmosphere at their dull rituals of queer-bohemia. There's some straight-ahead drum 'n' bass here, and blunt-by-numbers downtempo-less there, but all in all it's a fairly original album in a genre whose best moments are behind it.

PETER SHAPIRO

Various Artists

Musik Of Indonesia 10: Musik Of Batak, Inna Jaya

SPRINGERMAN/FOURWAYS SF CD 40422 CD

Various Artists

Musik Of Indonesia 11: Melayu Musik Of Sumatra And The Riau Islands

SPRINGERMAN/FOURWAYS SF CD 40423 CD

Various Artists

Musik Of Indonesia 12: Gongs And Vocal Music From Sumatra

SPRINGERMAN/FOURWAYS SF CD 40428 CD

Three more CDs from the ongoing Smithsonian/Folkways project to capture some of the micro-musical groupings of Indonesia's 3000 islands and 300 ethnic groups. Volume 10 concentrates on an island in the eastern province of Min Jaya (near Papua New Guinea), while volumes 11 and 12 excerpt from the western island of Sumatra. Smithsonian took up the Folkways legacy in 1987 and pursue their recordings with an anthropologist's documentary zeal. The accompanying notes are extensive, including an analysis of scales, instruments, myths of origin and history of modes of performance, right down to the controversies of particular recordings. The whole project is more a window onto an extremely varied ethnic matrix than a diadem of exotic musical jewels.

Much of the music here — the various Bak 'wor' songs, church songs and pop-dance music on 10, the Helay theatre music and rousing dance on 11, the choral jousting of debong on 12 — is for performance at public gatherings, dances and all-night celebrations



Dino Saluzzi

Cité De La Musique

BCH 1616 CD

The bandoneon is a remarkable instrument, that archaic, German-made, button-covered, monster squeeze-box you see in pictures of Astor Piazzolla. Dino Saluzzi has taken it into new dimensions. In his hands the instrument sobs and breathes and tears the heart out of any half-way sentimental tune, like a violin you can blow. He's in his early 60s, with a CV that includes work with Gato Barbieri, Enrico Rava, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and Charlie Mariano (which is how I first heard him, accompanying that saxophone's impassioned wailings). Though Saluzzi's background is in the Argentinian tango, and he has plenty of jazz credibility, this is neither a tango album nor a jazz jam. *Cité De La Musique* is more a collection of intelligent, rhythmic, semi-improvised chamber music, a genre that ECM has almost made its own. The producer is Manfred Eicher, ECM's guiding force.

The album features Saluzzi in trio with drummer-turned-guitarist José M Saluzzi (Dino's son) and double bassist Marc Johnson. The overall mood is languid and reflective, though

there are several brighter passages, such as the terrific percussive interplay between reverberant bandoneon tapping, guitar and bass on "El Río Y El Abuelo", and a sneaky riff behind the guitar solo towards the end of "Zurdo". "Gomón" is for bandoneon alone, like the long introduction to "Coral Para Mi Pequeño Y Lejano Pueblo". Dino extracts a hugely dynamic range of timbres from the instrument, check out the wheezy chordal clusters and the dramatic, slow-burning melody in "Introducción Y Himnos Del Ausente". My only reservation is that I would have liked to have heard more variety in the choice of compositions. All the titles are by Saluzzi, save the exception of "How My Heart Sings".

Until I heard the record, I had never really thought about what a good bass player Marc Johnson is. He is a great improviser, with a fantastic technique, warm sound, and is subtly ego-free to play the third corner in a trio with the Saluzzis, he's no idea what Johnson is like as a person, but I like to think that he has that all-important 'bass-player personality', the self-effacing but positive guiding spirit without which many line-ups would fall apart. From the arco part in "Zurdo" to the three-way virtuosity of the title track, he's an international treasure.

JOHN L. WATERS

and was recorded in situ. Given the social function of the music, the styles often favour a rough group chorus over single melodic lines. The 'wor' songs of the Bak people are a medium for expressing identity in all forms and for reacting to and accommodating alien intrusions. They take the form of a rousing

heterophony, where each individual pitches in at their own pace and with their own version of the descending melodic line. The sophisticated singers from Arronobes are particularly striking, recalling personal memories and songs from the messianic Keren movement of the 40s.

The pervading cultural presence of Islam and its dislike of sensuous instrumentalism means that much of the music consists of a rhythmic accompaniment to narrative, leaving or preaching styles (the country jug-band of yipson on volume 10 is a notable exception, using ukuleles, guitars and two-stringed

double bass) in *salawati dulang* (12), two male Muslim singers beat time on metal trays, drawing out their syllables with slides and trills while they discourse on current affairs and incorporate the melodies of 80s Indonesian pop hits. They adopt monikers such as 'Poison Gas' to advertise their masculinity in answering tough theological questions.

The music here is occasionally 'entrancing', but in trying to make sense of the sounds one is naturally drawn into the ongoing dialectical confrontations around ethnicity, religion and politics that shape the styles. There is barely a music here that is not in transition, decline or revival, or caught up in new cultural and generational eddies. Sumatran city dwellers regard gong music as old-fashioned. Mak Yong court theatre music (see 11) became village theatre after the revolution of 1945-49, and has now almost disappeared. The amazingly syncretic Zapen kate songs – a genre style for Muslim dance celebrations (also on 11) – have been overtaken by Islamic content and freely mix Middle Eastern and European scales. The swirling 'Pekantan' sounds like a quavering roller coaster over a skittery bassline.

None of these CDs revolve around specific virtuoso talents (one renamed name is Tioet, a 70-year-old still cutting it in the launchy doing battles), but the dry approach retains a lot of local colour. Those looking for glossy 'World' sounds and haunting gamelan samples will find instead sexily elderly women on the outskirts of Payeramban tapping out fest-paced rattling gong cycles like the patterning of rain on a roof top (12). The range of cultural forms and the syncretism of styles in Indonesia's archeological culture make these an intriguing addition to the ethnic music catalogue – provocative and broadening musical understanding, rather than dealing in exotic evocations.

PAUL REYNOLDS

Various Artists

Strata-2-East

LBNB05A, Sci Rep 5:175

Trumpeter Charles Tolliver and pianist Stanley Cowell established the Strata East label in

1971. Managed independently, and by musicians, it attracted some of the finest players to flout the fusion trend and go where post-bop led them — in particular the talented New York musicians who played with Toller in his Plastic Inc. quartet. Courtesy of Soul Jazz's sister label, Universal Sound, Strata East recordings began to see the light of day again a couple of years ago, and they have been enthusiastically re-released.

Senzo-2-Start is a collection of music made night at the start of the label's history, between 1972 and 1975. Drummer Kenio Duda initiates the action with a soulful, 32-bar Latin jazz tune called "Too Late, Fat Back Baby" in soulful, with solos by saxophonist George Coleman and Sam Stroner. The exciting two-handed pianist Harold Mabern. The Latin theme returns with tenor saxophonist Harold Vick's lively rendition "Senior Zambor." Vick plays strong, straightforward tenor throughout, aided by an outstanding rhythm section featuring drummer Billy Hart, bassist Sam Jones and Joe Bonner on Fender Rhodes. Senzo's groovy, swinging, electric piano piece "Senzo's Groove" features a solo by Harold Mabern. The "Harold Mabern's Senzo's Groove" is a swinging, occasionally a little pedestrian, but has a lovely, laid-back mid-70s feel.

Looking back to Africa, Stanley Cowell's "Travelin' Man" features flutes, vocals, mbira, maramba, and miscellaneous percussion (from Billy Higgins). There is magic in the interplay between the wooden and Western flutes, played by Manish Brown and Jimmy Heath. The John Betanc Society's "Ode To Ethiopia" is about ragged, polyphonic energy, a joyous and messy, percussion-driven blow. But the very best moments come courtesy of vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, who is exuberant on the 1974 "Get With It," and trumpeter Charles Sullivan on the deeply lonely "Field Worker."

If there is a *Strauss* East blueprint, it is this mixture of hard bop, soul jazz, 70s funk, African or Latin music and free jazz. These are short tracks, compared to the epic blow-outs favoured by the stylistically comperable Impulse! label, with less freedom but just as much soul.

LINTON CHESWICK

The Watts Prophets

Black Voices: On The Streets Of
Watts

ACRO-167 1670 155 CD

The Watts Prophets

Rappin' Black In A White World

ACED 1477 1478 1479 1480 CD

The Watts Prophets

When The 80s Came

ACID BATT. BATTERIES CO.

black voices began with a heartful plea: "Listen, listen, listen — hear us now! — hear us now!" Recording their first two albums in 1970 and 1971, and now back on record after a quarter of a century of community activism, the Watts Prophets were a product of 60s civil rights consciousness, buzzy, outrageous and highly vocal. Oss O'Solomon Smith grew up in Alabama. A segregated education meant familiarity with the black poets Paul Dunbar and Langston Hughes. He also learned from Rudyard Kipling. Even though, at the time it is Brian Cross in *It's Not About a Salary*, Kipling "really wasn't a black poet!" Richard Deaton has had written for Brendan Behan's troupe, the Doin'cypicals. Always, Angus Hamilton was *The Prophets'* street-smart, angry voice (all three note with regret that only his vocals are routinely sampled today).

The Watts Prophets are now hailed as the West Coast godfathers of rap. *Black Voices* begins by name-checking The Last Poets. New York egomaniacs who had beat them to it! However, far from representing some strain of gnot-dreck-from-Africa, the first two albums really spring from Beat poetry. Giving the lie to lazy assumptions about cultural apartheid, The Prophets revivified in the literary ambition and verbal anarchy of Kenneth Patchen and Rod McKuen. The Watts Workshop they worked from was always a mixed-race affair. However, the Prophets did have an advantage. Although few Beat poets like Kenneth Reisch rooted to jazz, because of the music's vocal inflections, The Prophets' grooves look as if fully intertwined with the say, hiss and creak.

(beautifully played here by Ode Hawkins)

The three voices create mini-players full of gospel-congregation adlibs and hilariously nuanced sermons ("The American Constitution," "The American Constitution?") This indignation and urgency of the politics expounds out of the period as The Prophets pour in the ubiquitous condemnation of television, pop-up toasters and all other bourgeois values. The Prophets' lyrics are a mix of biblical and urban vernacular, as Wild Man Fingers, Leroy Jones and Jean-Luc Godard. By *Repper*, Benji and Jeannette Dee Dee Macheil. Her female voice and perspective adds another dimension: this poetry thrives on debate and contradiction. Her "What Is A Man?" originally written for The Four Tops, shows how coffee-house renaissance folk-rock could provide a vehicle for Black Power sentiments (it also anticipates the ballads in *Blackout Nation*). Both albums are naive, critical and earnest, and the best of the best of the by-the-way scene and the bubbling rise of the shawls player of novelty.

The new *MHFI* the *90s* come twice as long as the earlier records, and twice as dull. Predictable funktrap backings by Blackalicious, DJ Quik and US3 defuse any confrontational pizzazz. The Prophets maintain their indignation about the state of the ghetto, but their emphasis on education and responsibility doesn't make for a gripping listen. In interview with Brian Cross, they denounced the black middle class who have turned the civil rights mobitations to private account. However, they don't translate these accusations into raps that might rattle and shock. The routine, session-man saccharine on "Searchin'" has little to do with the ghetto, and says on their insular records. The a cappella "Vanity" still has some fire. It makes you wish they had dated to record without the safety of commercial beats.

Amdeee is quite a nose in black politics, he's a priest of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and a friend of the Marley family. However, his idea of countering the excesses of 90s gangsta rap with maturity and wisdom hasn't passed the first hurdle: make a great record. Rap draws on intriguing cross-currents: Beat poetry, radio and TV commercials, cartoons, nursery and drover rhymes. Deconstructing them



PUSSY FOOT PRESENTS
A FEAST FROM THE EAST
"FISH SMELL
LIKE CAT" FISH
SMELL
NIP-HOP FOR SUSHI LOVERS
OUT ON HER MEJESTYS BIRTHDAY.
(WHICH IS APRIL 21st. REMEMBER?)

to hear The Watts Prophets — praise examples of the cultural mixing required to achieve the voice of revolution — kowtowing to PPR's streamlined notion of "black music." Art requires technical as well as political skill; the musical intransigence of a jazz or funkster would have been an asset here. Perhaps next time they could call in Michael Franti.

BEN WATSON

Kenny Wheeler/Lee Konitz/Dave Holland/Bill Frisell

Angel Song
ECM 1607 CD

Enrico Rava

Noir
LABEL BLUE 6595 CD

Tomasz Stanko

Locosa
ECM 1603 CD

Angel Song is a dream of an album. Kenny Wheeler writes all the compositions and his spirit looms large over the proceedings. It's a Wheeler album in all but name, though the musicians he's working with each leave a highly personal stamp on it. The writing is what makes it sound so different — Wheeler writes such entrancing harmonies into his rolling, folky pieces that the improvisations seem to take place in roomy Wheeleresque space. Konitz slips particularly easily into the set-up, sounding terrific throughout. Frisell is discreet and exact, and there's abundant spring and melody in Holland's playing. A drummer would only have got in the way. Wheeler solos heroically, scoring feelings of melancholy and fortitude out of both trumpet and flugelhorn. He has a way of suspending a phrase in the air before dashing off in runs, the squeals and blurs at the edges of his solos are superbly judged. Despite the bag name (note of the session, it's incredibly intimate and relaxed. This is music of gentleness, but it's no soft touch. Wheeler's as sharp a musical thinker as they come. And the resolute unsentimentality of the group gives the delicate music great force and energy.

Italian trumpet Enrico Rava is called an angel by his lover in the last frame of the lurid comic-strip adventure that was out the booklet accompanying *Noir*. In the story, Rava's trumpet playing saves him from a sticky end. It wouldn't have saved his guitars, though: this quirky set is marked by some insouciant rock-influenced playing, which sounds way out of keeping with Rava's warm, sensitive style. There's an ironic edge to his playing these days, but he still constructs a strong solo. He's got a kind of easy, intuitive lyricism that always rises to the surface. But his group, despite a dependable bassist and drummer, doesn't sound alive to his qualities. Nothing much is made of the two guitars,

Jimmy Lyons and Cecil Taylor with Sam Rivers



Cecil Taylor
Nefertiti, The Beautiful One Has Come

VENUE 202 CD

The first thing you hear is how awful the piano is. God bless the Cafe Montmartre for putting him on in the first place, but what an instrument. It's 1962, and here is the greatest of all jazz trios — with due respect to Jelly Roll Morton with the Dodds brothers — creating the new music as they go along. It seems absurd that we've had to wait so long to get this material onto CD, but at least Scott Colburn's mastering gets the best out of what were obviously less than ideal tapes, and once past the fundamentally thin sound, one is simply swept away by the power, invention and audacity of what's being made here.

It's possible to describe this as a transitional phase in Cecil Taylor's music, posed between the personal dissolution of what he perceived as the tradition and a subsequent near-abandonment of jazz language, but that would imply some element of hesitancy or looseness about the music. Instead, it sounds like a completely achieved distillation of ideas. Rhythmically, despite the relative brevity of some of the pieces, Taylor is already thinking in longform. The opening "France" feels like a piece which he can see from beginning to end, the propulsion and rise and fall controlled superbly by the pianist, even though Sunny Murray's drumming is as singularly free as he would be with Albert Ayler. Never does Murray play loud, either. Somewhere in between and in front

is the incomparable Jimmy Lyons. Where did this man come from? He sounds like Charlie Parker, only without any of the freneticism, then he sounds like Ornette Coleman, without any of that master's sometimes self-conscious blues-bitters. Mostly, he is himself. The famously wounded tone sounds purer than it would later become, perhaps ultimately injured by so many years standing in the face of Taylor's tornado, and when he picks up the thread two-thirds of the way through "Call", it's as moving a moment as anything recorded jazz has to offer.

The celebrated entry here is the huge, thrilling "D Trad. That's What", though what once seemed like a monumental workout has been downsized somewhat, given the many variations which Cecil has subsequently set down. Fans and scholars will, however, welcome the new material that has been added to the set (issued by John Fahey's new Revenant label): an extra version of "Call" and an untitled piece on disc two, which together add some 26 minutes of music to the familiar stuff. The drawback is that the fidelity goes down even further on these tracks, with what sounds like a tape recorder in the audience picking up only a few hints of what was really going on on stage. Still, here is the great figure in post-Parker jazz, flooding the senses of anyone who's listening. Since I've been listening to this music as long as I've been listening to "modern jazz", it seems strange to think that a CD generation will be encountering it for the first time. You lucky people.

RICHARD COOK

which are content to solo and comp away dubly, and nothing lives up to the steady promise of the comic strip.

Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stanko appears with the same group. Bobo Stenson, Anders Jormin and Tony Daley — that played on the well-liked *Maria Joannis* — Locosa has a similar feel — brooding, loose and open-ended, dominated by Stanko's ragged-toned long

notes. Daley breathes arch of persuasive space into the music with spectacularly economical playing. Despite the obvious integration of the group, it often feels as if the musicians are tugging two ways with Stenson and Jormin tracing a more conventional path than Daley and Stanko. Sometimes this is a fruitful tension, sometimes one wonders what an album of Stanko/Daley

material could sound like. Stanko plays with an enigmatic touch, not wasting a note, intensely aware of its melodic choices. It's an odd kind of intensity, as this group plays at such a distance from the indulgence of explicit emotional expression. An introverted album at times, but it bears the perplexing mark of Stanko's hard won simplicity.

WILL HONTGOMERY

The Tony Williams Lifetime

Spectrum: The Anthology
VERVE 537 075 2CD

Tony Williams Trio
Young At Heart
COLUMBIA 487 51 8 CD

It feels odd and depressing to write about Tony Williams in the past tense. Still, a child when he began working with Sam Rivers, and an offbeat under-age while playing the clubs with Miles Davis, he always retained the image of being "the young drummer".

Both of these releases were scheduled before news of his death in February. The double CD anthology covering Williams's work with guitarist John McLaughlin and organist Larry Young in the fusion project Lifetime starts at the beginning with tracks from 1969's *Emergency!* Williams had just left Davis's acoustic group. His own playing had been getting steadily busier and more aggressive. His response was to form this avant-garde, rock-informed version of the traditional Hammond/guitar/drums trio. Choosing the virtually unknown Larry Young was a very smart move. In thrall to bebop, Young's work sounds fresh today and must have sounded revolutionary then. On the material from *Emergency!* and the subsequent, and very dark *Turn It Over*, he provides an unorthodox, noisy commentary, crackling and grinding where others bubble and groove. McLaughlin was surely the only guitarist who could break the beat up to the same degree as Williams's cymbals. These early tracks are probably the best in the collection, setting a tricky, surprising agenda on *Emergency!* itself, and peaking with the nine minute masterpiece "Spectrum", which everyone should hear.

In 1970 Williams added ex-Gem bassist Jack Bruce, making the group half-British. The new music was more aggressive and rock-influenced, but tentative. Thankfully, Bruce sang only a couple of times (and Polydor originally had the grace to leave one of those tracks on the shelf). In 1971, Williams rejoined the group again, losing first McLaughlin and then Young; the result was a tighter but blander, vocal-oriented music. The collection closes with *The Old Days Rush* — Williams's final effort before Polydor gave the group the push in 1973. Lifetime's achievement during the Polydor years had come early, and rested upon the trio's extraordinary musical chemistry.

Williams recorded the unfortunately titled *Young At Heart* at the end of 1996, with pianist *Philipe Miller* and bassist *Paul Cohen* (the core of his touring quartet). It's an immaculately performed set of mainly standards, showcasing what an able pianist like Miller can do when prodded, pushed and cajoled by the greatest of drummers. Regardless of all the polyrhythmic mathematics, and in the tricky, indefinable thing called "swing", *Young At Heart* is a good

reminder of what a great sound Williams produced from the kit.
LIONEL CHENKIN

Workshop
Mogwai/Weisheng Xiang
LADIPART 2000 LADIPART 2048 CD

Genf
Import/Export
compost comest cds

Not all German groups are too enamoured with being labelled as Krautrock; so it seems wrong to lump younger groups with an epithet that could also be a misnomer. But the K word is almost begging to be used with regard to Workshop. Mogwai/Weisheng Xiang is a very fine piece of work. What makes it particularly attractive is a hard to define generosity of spirit that infuses their rhythmic buoyancy and rampantly experimental impulse. Occasional waltz with guitar and funk doesn't give it a diffused psychedelic soul feel. There's even a spot of warped torch singing on "Jonaika" which sits at the meeting point of Billie Holiday and Dama Suzuki. The spectre of Can rears itself as the two groups operate within similar parameters (and both hail from Cologne). Their influence is perhaps overt, perhaps subliminal, but paradoxically and crucially it all sounds totally new, and its good as most of the music produced in the heyday of Krautrock.

"Bruck Musculaf" is a broad canvas in which strange chorales and a tight-but-loose rhythm — with clanging cymbals — segues into a recording of the sea, some delicious avant-garde music and a percussion-led chant. The album is consistently melodic and the 24 minute track is totally compelling. But that only skims the surface by way of description — the level of inspiration and invention here is kaleidoscopic.

Taking of Can, Genf's album was recorded at their Inner Space studio in Cologne, but this group are coming from another direction entirely. It's difficult to describe Genf's music without missing out on some of the nuances. It's all instrumental and, superficially, there's a light Acid Jazz feel to some of it, but the beats are nailed down by the flexible but disciplined drumming — similar to Wolfgang Fur's work with House On Mars. That group are also evoked in Genf's use of quirky, souichy Electronica sounds.

The beauty of Genf's music is that it's immediate and very controlled, comprising short teasing phrases. The dialogue between the guitar and the keyboards on "Aachen-Brusel" is deliciously minimal to the point that the lines sound like bits out of different systems music, pieces locking together purposefully, and there's a manually played Techno lead to "Herrmann". This economy of expression is the complete antithesis of Workshop, and though Import/Export is not so dazzling, it's definitely recommended.

PINK BARNES

Frank Zappa
Have I Offended Someone?
RIVINGTONS RCD 10577 CD

The charitable verdict on this album would be to smile wryly as Uncle Frank jokes from beyond the grave, having one last tweak at everyone's sacred cows by collecting together in one handy compendium all his best-known songs of scatology, sexual looseness and taste. They're all here — "Bobby Brown Goes Down", "Jewish Princess", "He's So Gay", "Valley Girl" — an assemblage of veiled sneers and provocations culled from his later albums. Zappa deserves have three standard responses to this kind of material: an embarrassed shrug as they wait for the next guitar solo or other musical delight; special pleading which sees songs as ways of handing their hero's more 'serious' work; or the real gambit: defending them as satirical tapestries aimed straight at the belly of American complacency.

After striding through this depressing anthology, none of those strategies really holds up. Option One is unsustainable for the simple reason that Zappa's music is relegated on these tracks to mere backdrop. There are grooves of greatness — some wondrously raucous guitar on a live version of "Went Turning Again", one of a clutch of new mixes placed here to ensure that completists will purchase the package — but they offer only tiny oases of punctuation and the verbal onslaught. Option Two makes no sense here, given the posthumous nature of the project. Option Three is alive, where the real wrangles will take place.

Zappa's own position on most of these songs was flagrantly dangerous; he always claimed to be nothing more than a documentarian, recording what he saw without commentary, but a single verse of something like "Jewish Princess", where the sheer relish in pumping out insults spills from every syllable, demonstrates the argument. The thesis of Zappahead Ben Watson, in his possibly best-sold Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics Of Poodle Play, is that Zappa was an "absent center", refusing to adopt any standpoint other than as a defender of free speech, but this simply buys into the woefully naive myth of artists as people without social agendas of their own. The plain fact is that these are songs written from a position of cultural privilege (heine make heterosexuality) that consciously set out to ridicule and belittle members of groups with less privilege (non-whites, women, lesbians and gays) for that sounds like the (ham) political correctness, it's worth remembering that free speech cuts both ways, which means that if Zappa had the 'right' to unleash his stinking prejudices on the public, then I'm at liberty to lament that one of the greatest musicians of the 60s and 70s degenerated into a dull, salivating, middle-aged voyeur. Shame the cancer didn't get him in 1977. What? Have I offended someone?

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in brief critical beats

Rob Young sends those 12" platters spinning through the analytical mincer

Animals On Wheels BARRA BITE
EP POINT, BITE 004 12

Nervous Bird The Blue Clanger
EP SNEAKERS 5NE001 12

The Brighton-Cambridge Borealis are as stooping up as a force of awesomely polymorphous perversity. These two records are by the same (unnamed) individual. *Animals On Wheels* is a clean, scuttling drill 'n' bass record whose winky piano lines belie the leanome complexity of its rhythm programming. Incomprehensible, surrealistic titles and detourings recall the exasperating antics of Vienna's Farmers Manual.

Nervous Bird, the sparsely named Nervous Bird quartet's lurid-up, repetitive House beats all over the playroom walls, and finds they're covered with rubber.

As One In With Their 'Apps, And Moogs, And Jam And Tamps CASE
C40403 12

Great idea to mix last year's "Message In Hektic's Ship" by ace producer Kirk Degregio. On *In With Their 'Apps*, he seems to have broken more sharply with professed Detroit fandom, and throws in more of the rank 70s cheese he played out in his uncommon DJ sets. "Triumphant" derives its feigned-funk from disco-style handclaps. "The Electric Hymn" pits "Shit"-wah against Ambient wash over a half-speed jungle break to colorful effect. A promising prelude to Degregio's soon-come album.

Boymezang Soul Beat
REINER/MEINER 1001 12

In which Boymezang's Graham Sutton crosses over to the world of Buzsaki breakbeats, extended high-string drones and dublin lullabies. Sutton adopted jungle because of its capacity to express truths about the modern urban landscape, if this expresses anything, it's the moodlike the urban built-overage for subtle changes of state. "Soul Beat Runna" cloaks the far better "Hard Control", an original creation of sharply-crazed guitars and electronic keyboard stabs.

Andreas Dorau Go! lat Dna Niss
MIL: REMEMBERS UNCOM 2000 LACO 2049 12

Four German Techno headz pay tribute to Andreas Dorau, who apparently some kind of distant disco star in Germany, something like the country's hip to Riekie Reinhard. His live leaves the beeping voice pretty much intact, then scribbles all over it with a

tasty, backscratched middle break that argues with the forward flow of the trademark pulse. His brother's "Forever Sweet" may lost out to a skipping pressing on my copy, but I suspect that Mike and Reinhard are responsible for the razor-cut B-side mazes by Hoppy Sundays and Grungemas, too the latter track sends Dorau's nasal whine rocketing skywards on a vapour trail of gaseous, searing chords. beautiful

Echo Park Razor Kiss EP
LACOBREWS LEP003 12

You can come back tonight: Sarah Phoenix isn't singing any more. Instead, she's performing a kind of dwelling. *Sprechermusik* that's already easier on the ear than her recent voracious on another Seattle spin-off project, *Solar*. "Razor Kiss" thrives on lo-fi beats and short-metal guitar textures courtesy of Lo Ingular. Tony Wilson (aka DJ Syllid), Dom and Rotano's B-side rattle-out forms rhythmic, cleansing of the organ as only a Moving Shadow artist could. The closing "Air Vehicle" appeared with the speaking voice of I (think) James Brown, is as good a hunk of doomsday garbage can funk as you could hope for.

Funkstörung Funkentort
COMPOST RECORDS 013 12

No question this Munich duo deserve to be heralded as the German *Aufter*. Renegades from Unit: Heebes's Bunker. Awardedipient Michael Fahrensch and Chris De Luca have already collaborated with Gescom, and you can hear a few powerlines to their deconstructive of studio space and unpacking of rhythmic flow displayed by all contributors to Manchester's Skam label. Drum machines appear to be generating nano-rhythms, at, once set going, tiny agents are in there boosting them along—while Techno synth pads work on and off sketching out a melody in an acoustic so good you'd need Hubie to see the end of it.

Future Forces Inc & Fierce
COMBAST/IMPACT: REMEMBERS LACOBREWS 0107 12

DJ Fierce takes time out from Nico's peculiar authority for stoned young gentlemen over at No U Turn to collaborate with the Renegade Hardware label. "Constant" is just that: an effable, minkul tula hel-bell on plugging the present instant rather than hatching any coherent better-sown. "Impair" features a cumulating, grumbling baseline and nice echophonic effects in the

background, but an I believe in finding this kind of artless pursuit of darkness, obscured and one-dimensional? Guess I must be too well-adjusted.

Gerd Starburt/Wings Of Freedom UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE EVOG0 1 12

After an intro that takes up almost half the track, "Starburt" is released into the cosmosphere via a break that starts off incoherently but can't build on itself. "Wings Of Freedom" (he can't be serious) is a ponderous helping of half-speed Shalimar Techno-jazz. A crowd-pleaser.

Jammun' Unit & Kerosene
HERCOTT PHASES 012 12

Loisaida Sisters Home Cooking Masters 001 12

This is getting ridiculous, yet more postcards from the hardest working men in Techno, Jammun' Unit and Keri Hatt. Their collaboration with Berlin buddy Kerosene has two answers: having one of The VU's "Heroin" and produced by a vocal from ex-Liquid singer Mylo Applegate, the other with a supremely narcissistic rant from Keri. But the original is nothing more than a pretext, in fact there are more samples from Miles Davis's "I Love Jim Hasty" than anything from The Bonobo Album. Losaida Sisters are Khan and Vienna's Electric Indigo with a camp-as-Christmas pair of four to the floor salsa tunes. "Home Cooking" trades on a plundered, sped-up Afro disco party break—backed with the astonishing "Buggy Whip Rag", a powerhouse Afro trap whose middle section makes the bass kick into a sound like a deep-sea diver's last breath.

Kraut Cuij/Phoebe REAGAN 002 12

Peter Kraut is usually found supplying weird electronics for sound groups on the Swiss. I guess some here for London broadcast. Iminent Neger, his shredding acoustic jazz instruments—bass, baritone piano, trap drums, through a sampler. "Cuij" is a highly uneasy ride. "Phoebe" accumulates atonal piano and sunny background noises over a sound like a gas escape.

David Kristian Ectopic Beats
DOWNBEAT SH 02 12

Dropout Windstorms Broken Microphones EP POSE BEAT SH 013 12

Canadian David Kristian was producer of the month award for his exquisite, light-orange-sounding beats. "Drum 'n' Bass" elicits distress the kind of stuff, along with Plug. Squarepusher and the rest, as well as twiddling around with breakbeats like it's some kind of joke, but for my money this contains far more of the elements that made Jammun's last appearance so well-scrambled, unhinged tempo, total disregard for musicality and melody, sex and mystery, entwined with a sense of displacement that's

staggeringly alien.

Downsides: shows down a microphone of samples and off-kilter rhythms that constantly drag on hard-disco crashes (one track is called "Don't Let's Quarrel") in *Memory Of Hans And The Atom* is a radioactive elegy that decays to a coda of smothered "Safe piano and tuned vocal so good you want to eat it.

Le Car Autofuel EP PHOENIX/ALP 001 12

Le Car AUTO-Graph EP PHOENIX/ALP 002 12

Of unknown provenance, save that these two 12"s were shipped direct from Detroit, Le Car pay back their dues to the Euro Techno connection, using Kraftwerk's tender drum pads and monotone vocal interventions unabashed. "S'Pring", (or "Auto-Graph"), is the track that departs from two-style pop-acted piece the furthest, although overall this record displays a kind of wisdom that affects some of Repley's. A techno-obsessed transgressor. Personally, the first release "Autograph" sounds like an advance with infinitely more tension in the groove's tracks' minimalist inflex are given increasing torque values with syncretized clicks and Electro-whirls.

Locust Your Selfish Ways EP REAGAN/APHOLLO 30 12

Locust, aka Mark Van Houten, has always presented something of a problem to critics and listeners alike. His undoubtedly astonishing technology and instrumental dexterity are often obscured by the measures he takes to inject "feelings" (remember them?) usually female vocalists whose torments illuminate the dark corners a little too brightly. "Your Selfish Ways", a take for the forthcoming *Planning Light*, is a short electronic, ballad scored by Zoe Nibbel, the real action here comes from the remixes. *Unborn* shows adds some breakfasty BOB Sista dissonance with too much reverence for the original structure. Cassandre (aka Doris Daskalakis) takes into a down tempo meeting of Portland and Fear Of Phase-4's Talking Heads. But what does that say about the Locust original?

Tosca Buena Sarah G-STONE
RECORDINGS G-STONE 12 005 12

Tosca Fuck Dub REMEMBERS Vol 2 G-STONE RECORDINGS G-STONE 12 006 12

Hard-driving bag beats from Vienna's Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber. "Bionic Sarah" has three tracks do a Hippo cortical lounge invasion, and do it well. Meanwhile, the remixes of last year's "Duck" by Founa Flair, Haskman and Bearded encapsulate the myriad reasons why Germany has gained sovereignty over electronic music in 1997. If the choice is between the best and the execrable, Critical Beats, I for one am not afraid to sit in its lap. □

freefall

Clive Bell plunges through music's protecting veil and enters the realm of sonic absurdity. This month: Mazda madness

Dear Mazda UK. First of all I'd like to thank you, on behalf of composers like myself, for commissioning Michael Nyman to write a new piece. There can be very few car manufacturers with the imagination, the sheer vision, to get involved with cutting edge artists like Mr Nyman and myself. I believe the Vauxhall Cavalier people approached Harrison Birtwistle for a cantata a few years back, but they were ahead of their time. Surely this is an idea whose time has come, and may I say that it's precisely because Mazda is a Japanese company that you have the stylish Zen-like vacuity and the samurai disrespect for hidebound artistic convention in other words the sheer alien required to link your new five-door hatchback range to the best in contemporary music.

This will sound like flattery, but I've been reading your brochure for the new 323 series, and you really have turned the traditional five-door image on its head. It's a roiny hatchback, but it has the appearance of a coiled snake ready to strike. And it

takes my breath away how natural it feels to commission a double concerto for saxophone and cello in order to express the philosophy behind the 323. When you get down to it, these cars are shiny, sale, and need little attention — all qualities found in my own compositions, too!

Take no notice of the press — I thought the first performance of the Nyman was a raging success — sporty, sleek and surprisingly spacious. So what if Julian Lloyd Webber's cello was inaudible — isn't that exactly what you want from a two litre fuel injection model with digitally controlled automatic transmission?

Of course, on a deeper level, Nyman was expressing the Mazda philosophy embodied in the Japanese concept of 'Tinkatatsu'. And I know enough about Japanese philosophy to realise this is no easy idea to enshrine in a musical work! Although the literal meaning of 'Tinkatatsu' is a deep-fried pork cutlet, on a profounder plane it is relevant to Mazda's whole creative and marketing process, the whole harmonious relationship between people,

concepts, nations, etc.

Let me come to the point, I know you had some trouble with Nyman on this one. A fat fee, a guaranteed performance, all he has to do is say some nice things about Mazda. Then we see him quoted in the press: "I'm writing a fucking concerto and I'll do it the way I want to do it." Not really the embodiment of Tinkatatsu, is it? Though of course the Mazda 323 slogan does go "Designed for the Individualist".

I just wanted to let you know that not all of us composers are as touchy. That some of us would be proud to be associated with a sporty five-door that comes with air-conditioning as standard. When you pick a composer you want smooth handling, responsiveness, flexibility, elegance and a trouble-free ride — just what the Mazda customer expects. You've got a company philosophy? Sure you have, just like my test-drive it around the block a few times and I'm sure we'll be talking the same language. You don't want to be seen with a clanking old car full of bangs and harmonicas, I know that. You want class, a grand piano, strings, harps, something symphonic, something electric and blue maybe? Everything I compose comes with a three year/60,000 mile warranty. To paraphrase the Mazda brochure: it's everything you want from a composer. And more. Call me. (That's enough tooting for work — Ed)

Label distributors & contacts

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multi media

Scanning the interface of music and interactive media

Artifice 05

ARTIFICIAL CD-ROM

It's two years since the first publication of *Artifice* on CD-ROM, and my how things have moved on. The first issue had a rather meek bit of digital art (I'm though it was called "Around The World In 80 Frames") and the whole CD was a little staid and slow. The latest release is much smoother and efficient, and is packaged, as usual, with a chic and fat six inch square magazine inside a plastic envelope. With the CD-ROM taken as a companion piece to the mag and the conventional audio tracks included on the CD (courtesy of Scanner and Kruder & Dorfmeister among others), the whole *Artifice* is rather profound.

Aspects of the CD-ROM which stand out alongside the promotional Quicktime video clips for the rather good Eve (Peter Gabriel's latest anticyclic CD-ROM — see *The Wire* 152), are "Derives" and "In The Absence Of Empirical Data." "Derives" analyses the city as a piece of text and through fast cut images and typography, guides the user through an intellectual, architectural and urban experience that questions the subtle and synaptic responses. "In The Absence Of Empirical Data" — which I won't reveal here. Get *Artifice* — at £12.50 it's one of the better value CD-ROMs on the market.

MARK SPINNE

Undirected 1986-1996

Christopher Charles

PHILIPPALEX PHIPPS CD-ROM

"You sustained your music very well. That is, you let it hold itself up. I found it a pleasure to listen to." So wrote John Cage in 1986 having listened to Christopher Charles's composition *Kaikotto Kries*.

Undirected is a two-tiered release, one part audio, one part software. The audio section collects a mass of work from 1986-96, sourced from previous releases, mixed with sample banks triggered by a Max patcher on the Macintosh computer. Built up from found sounds — dogs barking, chanting Japanese monks, footstaps, a flea market in Hamburg — the work seems free of formal or structural relationships, paralleling the Cagean search for an external structure removed from a European musical convention that would not admit noises or pitches outside of the major and minor scales. Like the music of Bernhard Günter and Jim O'Rourke, these composers often operate at the threshold of hearing, playing with the vulnerability of sound and repositioning the listener as both active and

passive consumer: is the sound you are hearing part of the CD, the hum of your computer, the neighbour's dog barking?

Penitentially cataloguing his found sounds, Charles developed a graphic notation to direct their individual durations, textures and dynamics. There is a beautiful section in the attached notes where he suggests that the very action of transcribing these sounds becomes an audio event in itself as the sound of the pencil contacting against the score paper, and in fact much of the material on the CD suggests acoustic sculpture, not tempered by any recognisable narrative.

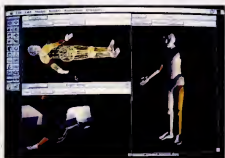
That's only the half of it. Slotting the CD into your Macintosh CD-ROM drive opens up a whole new sound experience: 47 Mb of software enables the user to explore this territory first hand. A patcher "undirected" undiagnoses sound resources from the internal server of your computer using the MAX/MSP 3.0 software developed by Opcode Systems/CAPL. Using a relatively simple interface, the user is able to manipulate any one of nine sections to treat any sound playing through the patcher, including BeatMinute, Tempo Division, Volume, Pitch Tables, and many more.

On the way to the software enables four channels of sound to play simultaneously and independently, and the results can approach the complex collages of Charles's own compositions. Charles has provided 100 samples to apply to this application and begin your exploration into the world of *Undirected* sound. Within a few minutes I was able to treat and manipulate sample texts that I had spoken into the Macintosh microphone, and produce a temporary work that stepped beyond any of the concepts I have about using systematic computer sequencing software.

Of course, the application of software to enable this kind of work opens up the questionable role of the composer in contemporary music: who is writing the music? MAX/MSP? Christopher Charles? The end-user? With much contemporary soundwork the artist is assuming the role of curator. When Chris Watson records a rushing brook, what is the role of the artist? What parameters exist to measure that? And how do we review this work in a traditional manner?

All creative work enables interpretation, but this particular strand of expression blurs the boundaries of sound still further. Anticipating the arrival of the Oval Music production software, *Undirected* points towards a possible future for sound exploration accessible to all those with a computer, trigger-happy mouse and ear for experimentation.

ROBIN THORP



A cursor moves across a computer screen on Hong Kong's Chen Chau Island triggering uncontrollable muscle spasms in the body of an artist in a closed Glasgow market. No, this is not Chaos Hypothesis but Internet had. Over the weekend of 4-6 April the World Wide Web became a two way interface that blurred the distinctions between performer and audience. Informed Web browsers and a live audience focused their attention on the Old Fruit Market in Glasgow, as this vast Victorian cavern, which still sports signs for LH Williams & Co. Futurists, was transformed into an audio-visual arena by the NVA organisation to host the Virtual World Orchestra.

The event was rigorously stage-managed. Huge suspended screens were animated by video projections, and hydraulic stage platforms were pivoted to shift the emphasis of performance and mutate the space over the course of each evening, while the soundtrack switched from Ambient washes to Phaedra-train-driving Electronics. Punters were allowed to log personal details by wandering lap-top screens, donate samples of body matter (blood and hair) at a medical centre, or enter a video interview booth which served as a digital confessional. Fragments of this collected data were projected at strategic moments, merging with the live camera feeds and computer sequences generated by the greater and lesser known design agencies Tomatis, Loma Chrise and Locofish.

These real world contributions were supposed to mirror the virtual inputs. Remote observers were invited to upload their own data via the related Web site (<http://www.vwo.org.glasgow>). With the aid of RealAudio, the browser allowed end-users to transmit aural or visual sound files directly to the Web server. These files were then mixed into the physical soundtrack to starting effect... as a Georgian falcon floating over metallic breadcasts in a multimedia gallery.

"If I've learnt nothing else these events

must be about personal experience. People have to feel involved," explained Angus Fitzgibbon, NVA director, and former member of militant percussion group Test Department. Some critics complained that the event was too narrow in scope: merely recreating, indoors, the 1995 installation piece *Stormy Waters*, which illuminated the supine yards of the River Clyde with video projections and then broadcast the entire spectacle over the Net via Multicast backbone video delivery. But *Virtual World* was a grand and ambitious project (not to say a production nightmare), a genuinely diverse event which attempted to encourage democracy of contribution, participation and remote interactivity.

The convulsing boogie belonged to Sledaz. It took this charismatic Australian performance artist, an hour to wire up for his 30 minute performance (aptly named *Paralyze*). Electrodes were attached to his naked body parts and hooked to the Internet. Cursor clicks on the anatomical Web page diagram stimulated his muscles to twitch and dance. While the performance gestured towards many currently fashionable scientific questions (are our bodies becoming outmoded and up for redesign?) or its evolutionary destiny (biological or cybernetic?), it made for a fairly mundane, meaningless spectacle. I'd have preferred to hear Sledaz conduct a debate by more conventional means, rather than look on, mute, as he dangled on the Web at the mercy of Internet browsers.

Prior to the finale — as a thunderous percussion broke into the Sledaz drum trance — David Ollendörff, a New York performance poet, raged against the machine. "We are dancing to a sound system that too often" she cried from a scaffold pulpit. "What about the skin to skin? Where is the touch in the dot com?" The audience broke into spontaneous applause as images of their magnified blood cells were projected on all sides.

MARK SPINNE

new notes at a glance

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6 London Symphony Orchestra

Haleward*** Beethoven,
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RI

★ 7 musicians wrestle everywhere

Woolrich*** War, Hughes,
Bruce*** Adams***
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Chilingirian Quartet

25th Anniversary
Concerts IV
Mozart, Wood
WH

8 Yonty Solomon, piano

Bosch*** Schumann, Bart***
Ravel
PR

9 Anthony Green, piano

Brahms, Wood, Green,
Schubert
Royal Holloway, New Road Square,
Hampstead, NW3
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BBC Singers

Murray Maxwell Davies,
Birtwistle, Ligeti
JCS

10 English and American 20th Century Music

Ives, Lutyens, Satter***
Barber, Taverner, Maw
Blackheath Concert Hall, 23 Lee
Rd, London SE3 0181 463 0100

10 Post War Post Wall - Stockhausen Plus

Stockhausen, Kilmayer***,
Zander***, Zimmermann,
Holler***
QJH

11 ChamberSax! - A Modern Sound

Berkley, Webber, Scollis,
Larson, Carter, Rogers
GC

Discovery Event:

Opus 20
Bartók, Hughes*** Patterson,
Hameenlami
Christ Church, Highbury Green,
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13 Trevor Wishart 50th Birthday

Wishart***, Wishart***, Lane
Music Department, City
University, St John St, London
EC1 1J7 0177 6284

Lontano - 21st Anniversary Concerts

Wolpe***, Carter, Varèse,
Berio***
JSS

'Rainbow over Bath' - Sinfonia 21

Holst, Anderson, Britten,
van Uen***, Bartók, Part
University Hall, Gloucester Drive,
Bath BA2 01225 463362

15 Project Remix

Milhaud, Martland,
Birtwistle
Birmingham Conservatory Centre,
Lisieux 01522 529828

Alex Hills, piano

Finnissy, Ives, Poulis, Hilda,
Erkoreka*** Clapperton,
Jarekac
BNMC

Philip Glass at the Royal Festival Hall

Glass***
R3711

16 Temenos

Stockhausen,
Mullen*** Lesser***
Norwegian Church Arts Centre
Harbour Drive, Cardiff
01222 454699

16 Ien Paca, piano Skempton*** Taylor***

Off***
CH

Phil Glass at the Royal Festival Hall

Glass
R3711

17 Surrey Philharmonic Orchestra

Frances-Hoad*** Vaughan
Williams, Khachaturian
Darling Hall, Regent Rd,
Dorking RH4 01572 452400

Carle Bley

Bley
RH

Meet the Orchestra

Gach
Union Chapel, Compton Terrace,
London NW1 0171 354 5195

18 Gabriel Keen, piano

Berg, Schönberg, Scriabin,
Stravinsky, Messiaen,
Bartók
CH

Post War Post Wall: Rihm Plus

Rihm***, Glanert***, Franka***
Goebel
QJH

19 Mrs Frazer's Frezzy

Nawson***, Watson
PR

20 Letterday Threesomes

Barlow, Scammon, Bussoff,
Newman, Fargion,
Zimmermann
CH

KSO 41st Season

Longstaff*** Strauss, Bartók
QJH

21 Wigmore 25th Anniversary Concerts III

Beethoven, MacMillan***
Brahms
WH

21 Mercia Ensemble

Hudes, Ottovinger,
Bulford, Porter, Parsons
BNMC

23-25 Bath Festival Jazz Weekend

'Folks', Bley, Beck, Full
Monte, Ballymore, Truvel,
Oxley/Watts/van Hove,
Asimov, L.A. K Tippett,
Richards, Lechner, Barre
Goldhall, Bath 01225 463362

24 Bloodcount & Paraphrase

Tim Berne
PR

27 Denis Smalley 50th Birthday

Smalley***, Harvey
Music Dept, City University, St
John Street, London EC1
0171 477 6284

Lontano - 21st Anniversary Concerts

Tower, Butler, Metcalf*,
Fitzler, Alberg***
JSS

Haile Orchestra

Britten
Brinsford Hall, Manchester
M2
0161 907 9000

★ 28 UPIC workshop at Bath Festival

SPNM workshop
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The United Kingdom - Explosive Diversity

Adds, Barry, Phillips*** Fox,
Finnissy
CH

28 Points of Departure

Emmerson, Paredes***
Vaughan, Whitty***, Ghana,
Palmer, Bellamy*,
Takamitsu, Natta, Piccini
PR

29 Almost All-Russian

Finsow, Grunbaum,
Shostakovich, Ustvolskaya,
Prokofiev Grant***
Hinde Street Church, Thayer St,
London W1 01395 223400

30 Ian Pace, piano

Skempton*** Cardew,
Feldman
CH

Dussek Piano Trio

Beethoven, Schoptron***
Mendelssohn
PR

Opus 20

Haleward*** Parutik, Bartók,
Lutobarski
GC

Bath International Music Festival

Xenakis*** Reimondos,
Shenazzu, Bernard, Ravel***
Goldhall, Bath 01225 463362

31 Bath International Music Festival

Xenakis, Truvel, Hoff,
Finnissy, Newman, Fibert***
Crane***
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* 1 SPNM event

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* UK Première
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CIB Conway Hall, Rd
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WC1

GGG St Giles
Cripplegate, Barbican,
London 0171 638
0851

JSS St John's, Smith
Square,
London SW1 0171
222 1061

QJH, QJH R3711,
PR R3711
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Def Leppard: false Metal?

The Accidental Evolution Of Rock 'N' Roll: A Misguided Tour Through Popular Music By Chuck Eddy

DA CAPO PRESS (PRK \$15.95)

Describing Vivid's *Amoxicon*, #267 in his 1991 *Stanley To Hell: The 500 Best Heavy Metal Albums In The Universe*, Chuck Eddy wrote: "On this insomnia-inducing regression into Monty's Pterosaurs, an awesker named after a baby farm ungulate splatters abrasive surf-glop over rapidly receding robotic-shuffle herky-jerky skin-slopping, while a vociferous named after a legless reptile snorts like a cat on a hot-tin-microwave." Tush-purting comical exuberance oozes from every pore. When I first came across Eddy's writing in the Village Voice ten years ago, what I loved most (and so copied clumsily) were the hyper-enlarded multiple motorway pile-ups of adjectives, his sometimes barely coherent rattle towards distinctions others only and smoothly declined to bother with. The any, stooie he worked most deviously to run was that all Metal was much of a monolithic muckness — for he knew that the more convoluted the more hazy; he'd sneak across the whole tired face of post-punk rock aesthetics. My personal epiphany came the day Eddy

dubbied Poison, Mötley Crüe, Bon Jovi, Def Leppard and Whitesnake "false metal" (27 October 1987, if you need anniversary excuses to party) other taps made me laugh more ("Chief-metal") but "false metal" as a genre with its own highs (Lip) and lows (Whitesnake), was for me at least a boobytrap-door into realization that "inferior material could be a better vector for manifestly superior mental-critical activity than endless trekking back and forth through the revolutionary musical breakthroughs we all at that time thought we agreed on. OK, so Eddy's aesthetic judgments were often a blur of square-boring personality and resentful passion — as thick with bad faith as bad jokes — but they were also a totally unexpected map of an overlooked territory, and as he'd hoped, they caused the shapes of the known to reflow in surprising ways.

Genre is still his obsession. He's convinced that our ways to carve music up, historically, aesthetically, racially, politically, are so much turgid dead-weight. They're a betrayal of rock 'n' roll's original misrepensible mongrelism its libertarian meaningless, of everything that first burst out of a ghetto and sunned outsiders into joy. And as he's come up with a bookful of his own images that cut across everything anyone could consider a "proper" way to organize music-types, records that

mention popcorn records that feature Spanish guitars, records with parties going on in the background, records that claim selling out as a virtue, Freud rock, Garden of Eden rock, omniscience rock, rocket rock.

OK, so this means a lot of silly lists and goodness, less an argument than an over-excited eight-year old pointing at this and that, and that, at all the brilliant, nutty things the gloomy grown-ups keep leaving out, in their self-important quest to shore rock up against charges of non-seriousness (this is a book where Bon Jovi get as many mentions as The Rolling Stones). And lists and goodness without explicit argument get a bit much after a while: the very fact that he's replying so much unlikely music from non-canonous obscurity becomes wearying when you haven't heard it yourself and can't find it quickly (some of his page-long lists would take six months to hunt out in their entirety).

But it isn't argument-free, though he approaches the hardcore points he wants to make in a baroque-perverse fashion, as idly as he possibly can. At one point he mocks Attalian nose-theory, accurately enough, the "stuck" stuck operating the moment you turn up expecting it — it isn't nose anymore, it's marmoset. At another, in a chapter that kicks off with a moral disquisition from his five-year old son Linus on the relative

effectiveness of reality and fakery in horror movies for tots (The Goonies, to be precise), Eddy assaults the at-rock cut of sexual authenticity-integrity round the likes of Ian Curtis and Kurt Cobain in terms of his (Eddy's) father's suicide, and his own subsequent pre-teen attempt to swallow Lysol.

At the heart of Eddy's aesthetic, in two basic claims. The first actually sets deco for ahead of rock as a source of the energies and surmises only pop music delivers. "Ignorance of aesthetic integrity, of where the 'edge' is, keeps people honest. 'Mainstream' limits music more than commercialism does," because music without "aesthetic decisions" is "free to be free." Actually, he'd probably prefer to be known as a "disco critic" since much of the music that makes him but generally comes under that heading (but don't forget that extreme fluidity of headings-making is something he wants to induce in us). "Free-to-be-free" is the "Free Lunch" theory of pop: that when you don't expect gloom, nose and politics (or whatever index of "seriousness" you prefer), you get that much more out of their armal.

Which leads us to his second claim, when he calls the "Gladys Knight And The Pips Rule": "Without the Pips, Gladys would be merely 'lame' — not catchy enough therefore boring, therefore not memorable at all. Truly Calling music 'intense' or 'imperial' or 'soulful' is usually a euphemism for 'it seems like something I'm supposed to like'." It's fairly obvious that The Pips alone would be an ignorable proposition, my point is that Gladys alone would be just as ignorable. Softness makes hardness harder, and that's a paradox people have trouble dealing with, in fact, lots of people think Popsess cancels Gladyness out.

This is a glibly expressed plea for anti-purism, of style and mood and intention, but it's actually much more besides. The jumpcut and the juxtaposition are the key expressive tools of the 20th century (with post-war pop music: their most extensive leveling ground). The politics of this fact have only just begun to be explored, very tentatively, often extremely naively, and it's a sad fact that a pop history book which references Def Leppard more often than Bob Dylan (and that indexes Guy Doldorf next to Hank Dink star Debbie Debi) can be smarter — and more radically alert — than anything coming out of High-Cut theory these last ten years.

But then ever since Richard Hell's *The Aesthetics Of Rock*, a strand of rock writing has struggled to hold onto what's of value, world shaking value in music whose "main reason of existence has always been to sell. Cleared ad new cars" (as Eddy puts it) — resisting all attempts to judge the music according to pre-

existing value-systems, because it knows the music contains valuable truths the pre-existing value-systems refuse. Haddening, relentless, fearless, weed and invigorating this book serves you. Ratcheting through territories you had no idea existed. If you really want to return (making the way you did when you left), you'll have a light on your hands — and these days, what more could you ask?

MARK SHERR

Do Capo, 233 Spring St., New York, NY 10013-1578, USA. Fax: 001 212 463 0742

The Post-Human Condition

By Robert Pepperell

HARVARD UP \$14.95

Robert Pepperell, co-founder with Gracius Matt Block of the multimedia group Hix, has taken time off from generating new forms of interactive CD-ROMs to write to produce this book manifesto for "Post-Human." The *Post-Human Condition* is Pepperell's self-assured Baudrillard through cognitive theory — one swift chapter covers "Being, Language And Thought" — fuelled by realms of popular science bestsellers: James Gleick, Richard Dawkins, Roger Penrose, etc. Brodding with enthusiasm about having made most current debates about consciousness redundant. Pepperell's brief digressions of neural networks, virtual reality and genetic algorithms are launching pads for hallucinatory mind-warps about telekinetic body parts, rocket engines built by billions of nano-workers, and the redundancy of death: "It is not at all unfeasible to think of ourselves communicating with a synthetic intelligence on another planet, swapping samples of digital artificial life through interplanetary cyberspace." And you can download *The Will to Unravel*.

In effect, the book amalgamates two entirely different modes of enquiry. On the one hand, there are millennial speculations about technology blurring the distinction between humans and computers, on the other there is this transcendent anti-dualistic strain that maintains that all distinctions — mind/body, human/environment, order/disorder — are only contingent human definitions. In reality humans are submerged in one indivisible flux of energy. "The generally accepted division between the human and its environment is inadequate in the Post-Human era and, therefore, redundant."

This kind of deconstruction of human categories is OK, it was Hegel's starting point and is a source of solace in many Eastern religions, but it's misguided to present it as part of a millennial overcoming of the world. The point is, if you seriously refuse the objectivity of all linguistic definitions, you can't really talk about any condition at all, human or post-human. Unless, like Hegel, you accept that these contingent definitions are historically determined within their own epoch. By contrast Pepperell's picture of an image of the 'human' dissolving into a totality

of electric flux is metaphorical dreaming.

Perhaps this position explains why Pepperell's post-human aesthetes propose such familiar value judgments. His analysis of computers and creativity contains some stimulating suggestions on the theme of continuity and discontinuity: beauty is ugliness repeated, is one — but they get lost in generalisations bordering on diatribes. "Good art is art that is aesthetically stimulating. Unhealthy scenes discourage the promotion of discontinuity. Good art always contains an element of disorder in late Turner landscapes." To establish a theory of aesthetics based on tensions between 'discontinuity' and 'continuity' seems a waste of space if you also argue that "continuity and discontinuity are present in all things depending on how they are viewed" (A 1969 performance of Stockhausen's *Sonnenwende* was branded as authoritarian by composers, and as anarchic by the press.) Instead of recognising the ideological nature of these judgments, Pepperell tries to ground a load of middle-class judgments about 'good art' in a rather dubious analysis of neural networks. In one chart he gives Euripides songs a high 'continuity factor' (quoted with Nazi aid) and sets Shostakovich at the low end, with the Beatles bang in the middle. Such 'energy' tables, based on intuition, unsparingly reproduce the conventions of contemporary society. What is surprising, given his musical connections, is that there are no mentions of plunderphonics, noise culture, synthetic sound generation — practices that do seem to venture beyond anthropocentric art.

The book ultimately delivers neither as a philosophy nor a guide to mutation (Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* is still a key text here). Where it is revealing is in its unfolding of the prevailing fantasy structure of techno-transcendence that believes between hopes of overcoming mortality and paranoia about loss of control is a tension as explicit as Jung's as it is in the speculations of Sade/Platt or Jean Baudrillard. Both reactions — optimism and pessimism — flip into each other, as both depend on the fetishisation of machines. The fantasy of technology as our genetic destiny itself suggests a longing to submerge the contradictions of individual identity in a transcendent power. We desperately want technology to take control of us. As Pepperell writes, "In the Post-Human era machines will be Gods."

Part of the post-human is itself the strongest advocate for the persistence of the notion of being human. Systems of politics, economics and gender create cultural constraints that can't be transcended by simply reaching for the stars, even when these are populated by mice with human ears. Just because the ideology of human-ness is contingent doesn't mean it is disappearing. Foucault was more eloquent here. As he wrote in *The Order Of Things*, the notion of man is "the effect of a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge. If those arrangements were to disappear as they

appeared — then one could certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea." Such a change can't just be voted in, and Pepperell's call to sign up to be 'Post-Human' seems little more than a fashion statement.

HAIR FRYING

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James Brown: Doin' It To The Death

By Geoff Brown

OMNIBUS PRESS (HARVARD UP)

This is not an attractive volume: the plain black cover recalls production proofs. Presumably in order to bump up page number and price, Omnibus have double-spaced the text. For some incomprehensible reason, all chapters begin on the verso: you feel you need to ignore the thing open to peer in and extract the pearls of wisdom. Luckily, Geoff Brown (no relation to his subject) has supplied us with enough of these to make it all worthwhile.

The author used to edit *Black Music*, and has published books on Michael Jackson, Prince and Diana Ross. Although this dispenses us of the delights of obsequious focus on James Brown, it's no bad. Nor is he tainted with the sophistry that allows intellectuals to imagine a theoretical superiority to the historical agents they analyse. In short, Geoff Brown really loves James Brown. He is also realistic. He is not afraid to point out the blunders — political or commercial — that blunted Brown's edge, especially in the 80s.

In a single sentence, Geoff cuts through the squariness about actuality that enables so much cultural theory to invade the facts of social inequality. "James Brown was raised in the sort of rural poverty that has become a cliché for anyone not actually experiencing it." A statement to be pondered by any postmodern seeking to 'deconstruct' the authenticity of the blues.

Geoff Brown is careful not to duplicate the data in the book. James Brown wrote with Bruce Tucker. James Brown: *The Godfather Of Soul* (1987). He had the benefit of the massive James Brown archive accumulated by Charles White (the Little Richard biographer and 'indefatigable' researcher received a Grammy

for his work on JB's indispensable *Star Time* collection, then *fatigue set in*). This means *Doin' It To The Death* replete with new material (Omnibus's stinginess in not supplying an index is cruel). There are revealing descriptions of Brown's improvisations of Little Richard in his appearance years, the sales-motivating dinner speeches King Records boss Syd Nathan recorded for his staff, first-hand observations from MC Danny Ray, manager Jack Barr, Bobby Byrd, Fred Wesley and many others. Yvonne Fair's story at Motown Records is a valuable corrective to the standard, role-eyed view of Motown.

Analysis of the role of horns and vocals in Brown's music of the mid-60s is original and trenchant. Treatment of such complex issues as blaxploitation films, Hip-hop sampling and the British Invasion (Brown's ban on foreign performers all display a rare combination of issued politics and musical insight).

A book like this is important. It shows that a huge social phenomenon like James Brown is not exhausted by an autobiography (great though it is). It also shows that, despite having to deal with cheapo, catch-profit publishers, those who avoid academia have certain advantages. Upright anti-racist politics, relevant musical knowledge and industry involvement provide keener insights than the armchair sophistry of pop studies. So let's hear it now for a hard-working man in soul journalism. *—* Mikel Geoff Brown

HUN WATSON



Mr James Brown

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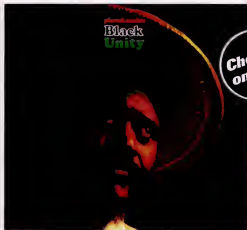
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